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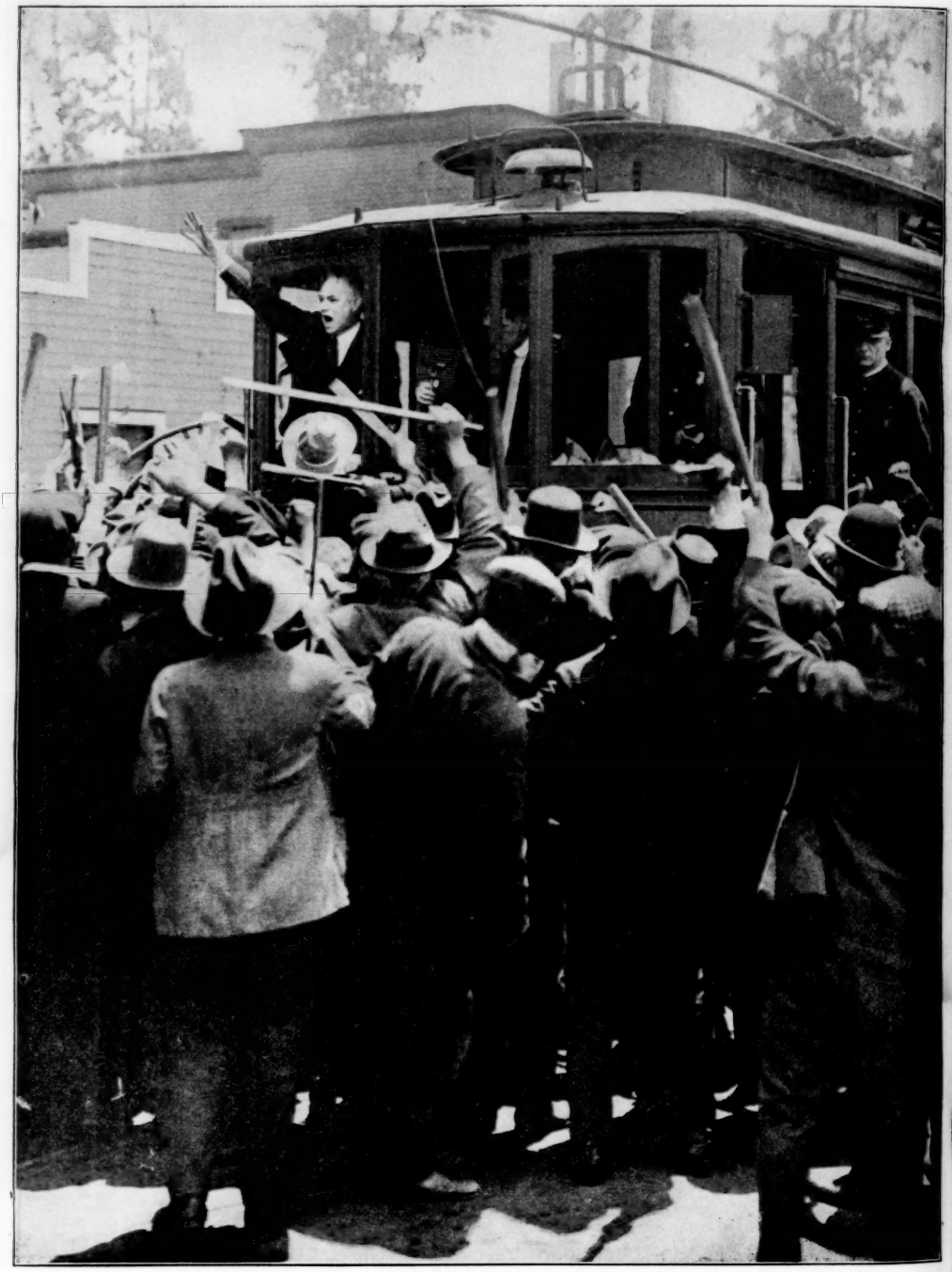
William Farnum adds another tremendous triumph to his repertoire as the red blooded modern Robinson Crusoe of the South Seas in Louis Tracy's famous novel "Wings of the Morning."

Dorothy Phillips leading a mob, and defying her own millionaire father, in her great soul gripping feature play "The Right to Happiness."

Tom Mix, the screen's greatest cowboy actor, proves his versatility by a new role in the thrilling Southern melodrama "The Feud."

Elaine Hammerstein, a new, youthful screen beauty, being tempted like Marguerite by queenly jewels, in her latest pronounced success "The Country Cousin."



Frank Keenan, one of the screen's most finished actors, addressing the strikers in his sensational release "The World Aflame."

Gladys Brockwell scores again and again through scene after scene in her latest rapid fire modern crook melodrama "Thieves."

Madlaine Traverse, beautiful, clever and a real actress, proves her right to the title of "the Empress of story emotion" in her latest thriller—"The Snares of Paris."

High-Hat

By FRANK BROYLES PARDEN

TREMBLING, puny hunchback stood against the stern rail clutching tensely with his long, white fingers the iron support. His eyes, wide open, watched intently the vessel's ebullient wake, foam-flecked and bottle-green, writhing over blue waves that piled back to the saucer-like rim of the world. The sharks were still there, sinister forms drifting in silence like black smoke. They had been following the ship for days.

"Well, High-Hat, think old Romney'll be able to make it to Egypt this trip?" asked Big Bones, a horseman sprawling among the idle crew on the after deck.

The hunchback started nervously and looked quickly from face to face. Under a mask of seriousness, the lounging horsemen waited expectantly for the moment to laugh.

"Oh, man!" The hunchback dwelt pleadingly on the last word. "Don't talk like that. What if sumpin did happen to this old ship with them after it?" And he pointed toward the wake of the vessel.

The drowsy horsemen woke up to laugh at his exaggerated fears. Then they hushed abruptly as if mindful of the energy consumed.

High-Hat's malshaped forehead wrinkled; he cried out louder, "Man, that ain't funny! That ain't funny; what if sumpin did happen? I had a bad sign the day before I signed on. I wouldn't have come if they hadn't told me there wouldn't be another boat for a week. I couldn't wait that long. I knowed I oughtn't come on this old boat."

His excessive seriousness made the horsemen laugh louder and longer than before.

High-Hat, more agitated, shuffled midship toward the galley to begin his pot washing. As he went he pulled down further still upon his ears that shaggy silk hat, battered and green with age. To this high hat—the kind a coachman, after wearing it at funerals all his life, might leave in the stable after his own death—the hunchback owed his name aboard the ship. His puny deformed body seemed longing to ooze into the hat like the body of snail into its shell to escape the dangers of the sea. The too-long hammer-tailed coat, and the breeches, whose waist band wrapped about his midriff and whose legs flapped on his thin malproportioned limbs, were as outlandish as that philanthropic gift which protected his head.

"You know what he reminds me of?" questioned Jadwin, an adventurer from Gotham. "With that make-up on, he looks for all the world like a clown escaped from the Hippodrome."

The second engineer, off duty, standing at the rail smoking a pipe and resting his eyes on the horizon, was listening. He wheeled and, glaring straight into the eyes of Jadwin, said, "That's all they'd give 'im to wear. That's all the clothes 'e 'as and——" He did not finish. He spat viciously into the sea. He had spoken so vehemently and knocked

the ashes from his pipe so sharply against the rail and walked away so angrily that Jadwin was nonplussed and embarrassed. He looked around at the other horsemen and then said superficially, "What's the matter with him?"

Nobody thought it necessary to reply.

"High-Hat does look like a clown. Whoever saw a pot-washer with a silk hat and a dress coat and white twine in his shoes? And as for somebody giving it to him, I say why doesn't he buy some clothes for himself. What do you say?"

The ferret-eyed assistant foreman, who had already seven thousand dollars banked from smuggled opium, looked up from the diamonds, clubs, and hearts before him.

"In the first place," he said, "there ain't nobody home upstairs in High-Hat's head to take care of what little he makes. Second place he ain't worth a damn, so nobody'll pay him nothing to get something with." Having analyzed the question according to his own lights and not caring a straw for the analysis of any one else, the ferret-eyed assistant settled back to keep a sharp watch upon his opposing self.

"I guess I look at it different," argued a grizzle-faced horseman who, because of the unmistakable markings of his terrene vocation, was called Tramp. "Just like the engineer said, them's all the things he's got. So that's all the body he was born with and all the brains, too. God didn't give him no more and he ain't got no place to get 'em."

"It's something I don't understand," went on Jadwin, still defensively. "What good is a chap like that? What's he worth? He can't take care of himself because he can't earn his pay. What good is a man like that in the world? When you get right down to the last analysis, he lives off the strong; off of you, off of me." Conscious that his hearers recognized his superiority, Jadwin expatiated upon his argument more fervently and with dramatic gestures. "We have to work to keep him alive. Our bodies pay his board. If he falls down on his job on the ship here, we have to do it; the work has to be done. Mind I'm not kicking, for I am as broad as any man, but I am just saying—"

Jadwin was interrupted at this point by the appearance of the veterinary surgeon, who addressed the assistant foreman.

"Another mule dead in your section. Get him out."

The ferret eyes of the assistant flashed fire as he flung down the cards with an oath.

"Seven sections to this infernal cargo. Forty mules have died; thirty of 'em in my section. Of all the infernal luck! If this mad-house ever gets back from Alexandria and if I ever sail on another lime-juice boat, I'll eat dog."

Tramp looked up. "What are you kicking about? Every one that dies leaves you one mule less to look after,"

The assistant's face brightened. "That's no joke," he admitted.

When he and his grumbling squad disappeared into the dark, foul hold of the S. S. Romney to haul out the carcass, Jadwin slyly eased over to a position at the rail of the ship—the orchestra-row for the coming show. He was none too soon for word spread over the ship that another mule was going over and all hands off duty hurriedly collected at the aft rail to await the event.

A close-eyed water tender called Gray Boy was counting with an extended forefinger. "Look at them black humps. Every shark in the Atlantic will be follow'in' this old coffin. I counted twenty-eight."

"Ain't they terrible lookin' things," sighed High-Hat, hypnotized and drawn by the very weird terror of the thing. He had slipped away from his pot washing too hurriedly to resume his long-tailed coat and stood with the sleeves of his dirty, torn undershirt rolled up, but the hat was upon his head.

Gray Boy turned a malignant eye upon him. "You just wait until that dead mule hits the water and you'll see what they'll do to you."

High-Hat's voice broke in an instant almost hysterical. "Oh, man! Don't say that. Why they goin' to get me?"

"You nervous wretch," observed Gray Boy, "I don't see what the blazes ever brought you to sea. You're afraid you'll get drowned, that you'll get shot, that the sharks'll get you, afraid of ever'thing."

High-Hat winced at each reference to the dangers.

"What's the matter with you anway? Don't you know when a guy is kiddin' you? They'll keep you scared to death all the time."

"I know they don't mean no harm." High-Hat twisted his head about to look up into the hard, obtrusive features of Gray Boy. "I'm jus' 'fraid . . . . . I don't know . . . . . I can't do nothin' for myself if anything happens. I ain't got no home, no folks. I've been 'cross seven times, but I got a feelin' this trip . . . . . An old woman in Richmond had a dream an' she told me not to come this trip."

"Why didn't you stay in Richmond and get a job?" asked Gray Boy, resting his elbows and leaning his powerful frame on the rail.

"In Richmond they fires me after a day, maybe a week. They say I can't work good enough. I worked good in a tobacco factory but the tobacco hurts my eyes so I can't sleep." Then the first light broke on the constant despondency of his face as he flashed the true secret of his ship voyage. "On the ship they can't fire me till it gits back. I got a job for a whole month and more."

Gray Boy's bison-like torso shook with laughter; his close-set eyes almost met over his high, narrow-bridged nose. High-Hat was pleased but before he could say more there was a shout from the motley crew at the rail.

A leather-lunged horseman bellowed, "All ready! Come on wid yo' shahk bait."

The end of the boom swung out over the sea.

"Good Lord, there must be fifty of 'em! One mule won't be a mouthful around."

"They have sense. See them give that screw a wide berth," called Jadwin excitedly from where he lay flat upon the deck, his neck between the legs of Tramp and his head outside the rail.

"Holy Father! Look!" A Siberian coal passer shrank as a whitish monster forty feet long swam past without effort, seeming to drift with a mysterious current. It was a sickly, ghastly white of submarine depths untanned by faintest sun rays; more horrible because of grotesque proportions, whitish wing-like fins, a fish-cleft tail and a head that showed no eyes where a parabola-curved slit a yard across opened and closed

gently and displayed une n rows of gleaming triangular teeth. As the monster passed, it revolved in the same effortless manner that it proceeded. Turned over to its proper position, its blackish color presented hardly a less fearful aspect; but the pointed head, pig-like eyes and horn-like dorsal fin identified it as a white shark, the man-eater and belonging to the largest species. "Chorney Chort," breathed the Siberian.

Big Bones overheard him. Immediately he raised his leather-lunged voice: "Listen what Peter calls that big one. He has named him. What is it you call him Peter?"

The name struck its mark. The crew shouted its approbation.

"And what does Chorny Chort mean, Peter?" shouted Big Bones in his ear.

"Black Devil," whispered the Siberian.

Thereafter the great shark, distinguished by its superior size and a peculiarly wicked leer in the set of its pig-like eyes, was known as Chorny Chort, Black Devil.

A slip noose shot and let drop the carcass of the mule. A terrific commotion took place around it. There was a flash of swift, dark forms entirely surrounding it, a gleam of triangular-toothed jaws at the limbs. Chorny Chort seized the neck and the carcass disappeared beneath a brownish whirlpool only to emerge shorn of limbs and head. Another rush and the carcass was borne under for the last time.

During the height of the excitement, Gray Boy reached behind him to pull High-Hat forward. "Come here. I'll put you on the rail so you can see."

High-Hat screamed like a maniac, wrenched loose, and fled to the galley where he crouched trembling underneath the bread table, both hands over his eyes to shut out the memory of what he had seen.

When the yelling of the horsemen had subsided, in an aftermath of reflection, Tramp spoke, not loudly but so distinctly that every one heard him:

"Wouldn't it be Hell if something happened with them following the ship?"

No man had the courage to jest or reply, for every one saw like a picture on the sea of indigo a hundred square yards streaked with brown foam, rippling under the surface with living monsters savagely plying hither and thither with uttermost fury, and sweeping into red gullets floating bits of hide, grisly, yellowish fat, and disgusting entrails.

On the bridge the captain read a wireless report and issued a command to the mate. "We have picked up a communication between two submarines; begin zigzagging at sunset. Don't allow any more carcasses to be thrown overboard. A dead mule afloat in our wake would have a torpedo under deck in a trice."

The mate was pale and he grinned uneasily. "Yes, sir, I'll see to it. But you needn't worry about the carcasses," and with a jerk of his thumb he indicated the wake of the vessel where now the sharks seemed as innumerable as the waves. "I'd as soon have a submarine behind us."

At midnight, or a little after, the crew of the S. S. Romney were jarred from their sleep by a heavy explosion. Such a silence followed that those who had not awakened entirely were inclined to doubt that they had heard anything unusual. They prepared to fall asleep again but were violently aroused by a

piercing shriek followed by an incessant bellowing of the steam whistle. Then they knew—a torpedo had found old Romney's hull at last. From underneath their heads they snatched their life preservers.

High-Hat was one of the first to reach the deck. He had slept in his clothes and did not need to dress. Rushing silently across the boat deck and carrying what little luggage he had tied up in a handkerchief, he tripped over the buckled deck plates and fell heavily. Scrambling up he grabbed his old silk hat and ran toward the boat to which he had been assigned in drill. Then he saw that the force of the explosion had wrecked it. He looked about as if he did not know what to do next. There had been no instructions for such an emergency. Impelled to do something, and not knowing what else to do, he began to run.

Horsemen, firemen and crew swarmed on deck, for the ship was sinking fast. Officers called the roll while the boats were being swung on the davits. High-Hat joined a large group on deck; he saw a larger group and ran to it. When it broke up, he followed the largest section. Motivated by the pack instinct, he sought safety with the largest numbers. It was not known whether there was boat space enough for all. High-Hat would crowd forward until a boat was filled; then run away to the next to see if they would take him. But he did not trust these men; he did not attract attention to himself. If he had a chance he would slip into a boat, but he did not ask for a place. Not a word had he uttered since the explosion.

"Step lively, step lively! Load and cast off before she goes down and carries the boats with her," commanded the officers.

But now that it was time the crew was reluctant.

The fast rising water struck the fires and enveloped the ship in a mist of steam. From below came the squealing and pounding of the frantic mules, sounds of rushing water and the crash of cataracts as the sea came in at the ports and fell from deck to deck. Yet the miserable crew hesitated to leave the old hulk, for no one had forgotten the sharks.

Neither had the officers forgotten them, but they knew that the ship was sure to sink and the only hope of safety lay in the boats.

"Very well, stay where you are until you are in the water; the sharks will clean up."

Aroused by this, the crew embarked and rowed the lifeboats away barely in time to escape the whirlpool when the old freighter rode her last ways to the bottom.

"Pay attention. I'm going to take roll," commanded the captain. He sat in the stern of Number One. His left arm was in a sling; his left shoulder hung. He had received a mortal wound in the explosion.

"Beginning with the first man in the bow, call your name."

The men responded as ordered. Then the second engineer, who was the only other officer in the boat, responded.

"'Ere's another man, sir. Wait." He shook a wet bundle of rags underneath the feet of the men.

"Wake up, man, and tell the captain your name."

"Is he wounded?" inquired the captain.

"I don't know, sir. Wait! I'll 'aul 'im out and take a look at 'im."

"Ah, I know 'im. 'E 'as his 'ead soused down in a silk 'at. One of the 'orsemen, a little 'unchback."

"Man from Number Four," said the captain. "Next man."

"Here," responded Big Bones.

"Here," answered the ferret-eyed assistant foremen; likewise Jadwin.

Gray Boy was the last man to answer.

"Thirty-two," observed the captain. "We are over-loaded." Then to the helmsman, "Steer by the Great Bear and hold a course on the nearest point of the cloud bank. It ought to be land." Then to the second engineer, "See to the signals and rockets."

"Land, by God, if it is only land," Jadwin mused.

Eyes that swept the desolate waste to the rim of the world and back in anxious scrutiny turned again and again to the low-hung purplish mist—or maybe land. Surreptitiously, between strokes, every man who had the chance cast a searching look in the wallowing wake.

Before the moon set, the other lifeboats were seen to bear a most erratic course that tacked madly from first one point of the compass to the other. Later, pistol shots were heard; rockets went up in quick succession and distant shouts came strangely to the ears of the men in Number One. No one spoke, no one asked any questions, but every man knew the significance and pulled until his oars bent like bows at the locks. In response the over-loaded boat ploughed slowly ahead.

"That is a fog bank; see the sky between it and the horizon," said Jadwin to the man next to him.

"Not land?" groaned the man.

The captain had slid off the seat to the bottom of the boat with his back resting against the side. His eyes were closed; there was little sign of his breathing.

"Day's breaking now," observed Jadwin.

"Yes, and where are the other boats?" asked his companion.

At first they could see only that the heavens behind them were beginning to glow; the horizon to separate sky and water in a definite line; while the waves, breaking in their eternal rise and fall, were yet colorless in the distance; nearer the boat they merged gradually into a green of profoundest saturation.

"I don't see the boats," said the man. "There's a big piece of wreckage. See it away yonder, about three hundred yards, the black objects riding almost submerged."

"Them's two boats. They're turned over and they're empty," corrected Gray Boy, who was accredited with the sharpest eyes.

"Yes," agreed Jadwin after a moment, "I can see a third one."

But the eyes of the second engineer had never shifted from the horizon on the bow.

"What do you make out a'ead of us, Gray Boy?" he asked.

Gray Boy studied the horizon intently for several moments, while every one within ear shot hung breathlessly for the word of his discovery.

"I'm watching that point to the sou'h east; appears like its the sharpest and if it don't shift, it's land," calculated Gray Boy, his keen eyes dilated to catch every ray of light.

The extent of the horizon from a boat in noon-day light is scarcely better than

eight miles, and while the object of the crew's hopes could not have been half that distance. The smallness of the angle of vision, the motion of the water, and the shifting condition of light called for the sharpest scrutiny. Some time before, a search had been made in the boat for binoculars; none had been brought from the ship.

Finally, Gray Boy turned to the engineer. "I believe it's land."

The magic word acted upon the oarsmen like the opening of an emergency steam valve. The boat surged forward steadily, minute after minute.

"Maybe they got enough," offered the helmsman, whose eyes were on the wake as much as the bow, searching for the first appearance of the sharks. "The crew of two boats," he calculated. "It ought to be enough."

The men were keyed to two extremes, the anxiety to reach land, and the fear of discovering the sharks in their wake.

The first lay within their oars. At every stroke the purplish cloud before them took on more definitely the outline of a low-lying coast.

And for the second, they were not kept long in suspense.

"Here they are!" Big Bones was the first to see a ripple beside the boat and a triangular protuberance noiselessly cleave the water. Beneath it a gray monster was drifting silently past.

The boat fairly rose in the water from the sudden power thrown into the oars. In spite of its cumbersomeness, in spite of its load, in spite of everything, it surged ahead. But now on the port side, now on the starboard, noiseless ripples sheared the surface of the green water as the sharks, moving silently as smoke, surrounded the boat. Perhaps a fast destroyer under full steam might distance them, but a row boat. . . . The sharks drifted past, circled it, then stood alongside.

Appearing first as a cloud in the crystalline depths, then assuming shape rapidly and growing in formidable proportions until it reached the surface right under the oars, came Chorny Chort.

The oarsman nearest leaped from his seat toward the other side, crying loudly, "Look at it, it's bigger'n the boat!"

His movement rocked the boat and caused the oarsmen to lose stroke. The captain came to life again. "The next man to leave his seat goes over the side with a bullet through his head."

After this incident, the crew became singularly silent. Whether to conserve all their energy for the oars or to make peace with their souls, no man spoke.

Crouched in the bottom of the boat High-Hat was having the most glorious, the most thrilling sensation of his life. He was thinking. He sought no explanation, madness or sanity, it was enough to do what he had never been able to do before. All his faculties were suddenly unfettered. Even his senses picked out every separate sound with clear distinction. There was the rushing of the water underneath the boat that was like wind in his ears, the quick, rhythmic grind of rusty oar-locks and the deep labored breathing of men above him. He wondered why they pulled so hard, so fast, pulled their very hearts out. Why prolong their own suffering? Better to throw down the oars and be done with life on the instant. Could they not remember the cries of the men in the other boats heard a little while ago and now heard no more? There was of all

things, but one thing to do—row; and that availed them nothing.

Besides this novel ability to reason, High-Hat discovered that his memory was as clear as the blue sky. He recalled every man in those boats already turned over. There was the man who slept in the bunk under his, the man who used to snore, and there were the two messmen; only yesterday he watched them, ladles in hands, standing in the galley door jesting and serving the horsemen as they passed in line. And others he remembered as well, who had crowded him out. High-Hat reflected that he had only to raise his eyes above the edge of the boat to see all those men about him, their poor dismembered bodies in the maws of the sharks.

A passive picture of himself as he struggled through life's gutters living for nothing but pain and fear, presented itself. As if his mind were already apart, High-Hat contemplated with disgust his poor, miserable body cringing in the billage, too weak to take a turn at the oars, too nervous to hold the helm, too frightened to fight for life, too cowardly to die calmly. Why should this dull body escape this time? What awaited it? It would never grow stronger, its wits never grow sharper. For sin committed before its existence, this body was born in misery and lived in misery. Under what obligation and to whom and by what right did it continue to exist? High-Hat wondered why these things had never occurred to him before; as for the present his mind was decided. He felt curously light, giddy with the making of the only straight-forward decision of his life. But though his new self was resolved, it could do nothing with his body; he had no more will power, no more strength, no more courage than before.

The sharks began their attack upon the boat by snapping the oar blades off as they touched the water. Three oars were gone already. By closing in they fell in the course of the bow. Shock after shock, as the boat struck their stubborn bodies, broke up the rhythm of the oarsmen's strokes and gradually retarded the boat's progress.

"What the hell!" bellowed Big Bones. "Hold on to that helm. Are you 'sleep there?"

The helmsman was as white as foam when he reached for the rudder handle that had jerked from his hand. "That's the one that did it." He indicated with a nod where Chorny Chort was coasting through the water five yards away like a spent torpedo.

The gray monster dived and turned back to repeat the attack on the rudder.

The captain twisted about, evidently with agony, but he managed to take an automatic from his clothes. With a burst of speed, Chorny Chort charged and the captain emptied the magazine with the sound of a machine gun.

Chorny Chort, one eye missing, swerved aside lashing the sea into a foam in a paroxysm of pain. Then wheeling, he drove straight into the middle of the boat with an impact that threw it on the side. The sea came over the gunwale in a cataract. But for the fierce leap of the second engineer to the opposite side, the boat would have capsized then and there.

"Pull a'ead and bale 'er out," he commanded when the boat had righted. "Overboard with the water keg and lighten 'er."

When the water keg struck the sea the sharks bore down upon it lashing for a chance to carry it under. Free for an instant, the boat drew yet nearer the land.

In the bottom of the boat, drenched with billage, High-Hat was exulting, for in his last hours he had become a duality. From groveling fear born in his bones had emerged the greatest of all courage; from the dullness of wits that had made him a butt of jests all his life came the supreme question of philosophy—*why?*—and he had answered it.

"Something else has got to go over," Big Bones was yelling.

The crew cast about for what would save them. There was nothing in the boat but the men. Candles, lanterns, sail-cloth, all were gone over.

Two men who sat near together pointed at High-Hat, their eyes meeting with a flash of understanding. But the body of the captain had fallen face down upon the bottom of the boat. It was motionless, and by the order of the engineer, it was dropped overboard.

Like Lot, fleeing from the burning city, every man kept his eyes on the shore ahead and pulled with the power of a demon. The body of the captain gave them a hundred yards. The coast lay less than seventy fathoms away. The eyes of the crew could discern clearly the line of high tide and even the wrinkles on the sand.

For a moment a panic seized High-Hat's new self. Suppose the boat reached land. Every stroke of the oars was bringing it nearer; any moment the boat might run into water too shallow for the sharks to follow. And for him would stretch away years of wandering and misery. But there was the warning of the old woman in Richmond, the cronying, gray-haired witch-woman, who spread out cards to read life; she knew; she could not be mistaken.

But with the rudder gone and with odd oars the boat was unable to reach shallow water before the sharks again overtook it.

"Take off your clothes and throw them over in bundles," commanded the engineer. Every man obeyed.

"High-Hat, your clothes." They seized him roughly. "Oh, man!" he wailed, speaking for the first time since the wreck. "Oh, man, don't, don't." And he rolled himself into a rigid ball and pulled the brim of the strong old hat until it slipped over his ears and covered his head. Violent jerks succeeded only in ripping handfuls of rags from him. High-Hat's new self was surging, "Take me, take me," it urged, but his tongue refused to speak the words.

At this moment Chorny Chort struck the side of the boat and cracked it. At any moment now it might cave in. Within a few strokes of land the crisis of their peril was at hand. Should the boat go under, every man would be lost were they but two fathoms from safety. The violence of the sharks was at its height and unless something again distracted them, destruction was certain.

"Something else goes over or we are lost." The thrilling significance of the voices of the two men who had an understanding attracted the eyes of the others to High-Hat.

"High-Hat," cried the two.

Then Jadwin spoke. "No, let us draw lots."

It was a quick, fierce controversy, every man speaking at once and death trailing every word.

"And if you lose will you go over?" countered the ferret-eyed assistant.

Jadwin hesitated. They turned from him. "Over with High-Hat."

"Don't," said Tramp. He covered his face with his hands. "Don't throw the little fellow over."

"You or him." The ferret-eyed assistant was implacable.

"Wait, maybe we will get through," proposed Jadwin.

"Wait hell," bellowed Big Bones. "We're sinking."

"First man lays 'is 'ands on 'im reckons with me." The second engineer rose in defense.

"Somebody goes over," the assistant foreman blazed right back.

Chorny Chort struck the side of the boat again.

The oarsmen pulled heroically, but there were so many more oars on one side than on the other that the boat spun in a half circle and faced out to sea again. At every motion, the water poured in. The end was in sight. Twenty yards away Chorny Chort was turning about to charge; that would be the last.

"Over with him, quick," yelled Gray Boy with a fierce oath.

"Don't touch him," thundered the engineer.

Two men reached under the seat and seized High-Hat. His new self exulted in victory. The engineer sprang at the throat of the nearest man; but ere his fingers closed upon it, Gray Boy, rising dexterously, not to tip the boat toward the damaged side, struck the engineer behind the ear with the broken oar.

"And me, too." Tramp brandished his oar. "You'll have to bowl me over before throwing High-Hat out."

"That's easy done." The ferret-eyed assistant foreman sided savagely with Gray Boy.

"By God, we'll all go down, but there will be no two against one." An oarsman had sided with Tramp and rose with his oar uplifted for murder.

The battle that would have proved disasterous and fatal for all never broke. High-Hat's new self had conquered. It reached out into another life and triumphed over his fear. He laughed, loudly, joyously, wonderfully. Clambering up swiftly, the mangy silk hat swallowing up his head and half his face, he flopped over the gunwale into the sea. The sharks wheeled and this time they were not disappointed; nor was High-Hat's new self. It was free to enter that oblivion that knows no misery, and pays no penalty for inherited sin.

Whether from fact or imagination, the sound of High-Hat's laughter came again and again to the ears of the fleeing crew long after he must have existed no more. With the time gained, the boat came safely into shoal water, too shallow for sharks to pursue. The thirty naked men, some carrying the unconscious engineer, waded ashore—the price of the man who wasn't worth a damn.

Compliments of Miss Marshall

By R. A. FARRELLY

N a crisp forenoon in October last year, a smart, shrewd-looking, handsome young woman, dressed for the street, got on her knees by the closely curtained window of a room in one of those humble little old fashioned brick boarding houses in West 22d. Street, New York, and peered through the inch of space at the bottom of the shade. Across the street she saw a slouchy youth lurking in a doorway.

"Still on the job!"

The girl put a knitter's bag on her left arm, picked up a packet of letters and let the curtain run up. Standing against the window she examined these very carefully, counted them, opened her bag almost against the window glass, put the letters into it and turned away.

A minute later she left the house, walked east without hesitation, but almost half a block away, put her foot on a doorstep, bent over to arrange a shoelace and watched under her arm. The slouchy youth leisurely followed, occasionally scratching his head.

"Two of them trailing me to-day? That scratching looks like a signal."

She walked on as though unconscious of pursuit. At Broadway she got into a crowd, was jostled rather violently, felt a slight pull at her bag and, by its sudden loss in weight, guessed that some one had taken the letters. She made no outcry, went on carelessly and took a Broadway car uptown. The slouchy young man was on the rear platform. At 34th. Street she went into a large department store, by the main entrance, almost immediately came out of a side door, crossed the street and disappeared into the escalator of the elevated road. From the platform she watched the slouchy shadow look around in all directions, at loss what to do or where to go.

"Easy enough!"

In a downtown train she examined her bag and found it had been slit open.

"Clever sleuths!" she remarked.

At Cortland street she took the tunnel to Newark. There she entered the office of the Essex Safe Deposit Company and paid a year's rental for a box in the name of Miss Ethel Edwards, Closter, N. J. She was taken down into the vault, given two flat Yale keys, a japanned box for her treasures and was ushered into a private compartment where she carefully closed the door and unfastened her waist.

From inside her corset, where they had been snugly packed around her whole body, she took out, one by one, some twenty letters in their postmarked envelopes, all addressed to Miss Anna Marshall at the house in West 22d. Street which she had just left. Around her neck was a stout twine, a piece of common, commercial string, not the baby blue ribbon nor the thin gold chain of romance, merely a cord. She drew up from her bosom a chamois bag, took from it an engagement ring, a diamond brooch, a pearl ring and two papers. The first was a license from the State of New

York dated some three weeks earlier for the marriage of Anna Marshall and Staats Livingston, both of New York City, filled out, signed by both parties and countersigned by the proper authority, a perfectly good marriage license. All these things, letters, jewelry and license went into the japanned box. The last paper she read over twice. It was dated a week later than the license and read:

"My dear Nan,

You will be surprised to learn that by the time you get this I will be on a steamer bound for Europe. You were so determined on every kind of regularity, even after we got the license, that I decided maybe you were right in saying I ought to tell Uncle. Well, I did last night and there was a fierce time. I fought all I could for you but he wouldn't hear of an immediate marriage. Finally, he put it up to me that I should go abroad and not see you for six months and then if I still wanted to marry you he would not object. You can guess I jumped at that because I know I can trust you to wait that long and you know my love for you will never change. Of course, all sorts of jobs will be put up on us to break up our love, but we know each other and know all such jobs will be flat failures. I am not going to look at a girl in Europe and I hope you will have only my face before your eyes in New York.

So this is good-bye, Nan, for six months, when I will come home and we'll be happy together forever.

Your loving

Staats."

She kissed the letter lingeringly and put it with the others. The clerk unlocked the ponderous door, studied her face a moment that he might know her again and bowed her out. She went to a department store, sought the rest room and in privacy, unbuttoned her waist, partially unloosed her corsets and inserted one key in the inside lining on one side and the other in the lining on the other side. Places had been arranged where they would lie flat against the ribs of the garment and seem to be part of its bony structure. When she reached the street she breathed freely and whispered to herself:

"Now fetch on your dogs."

Perhaps I should stop here and tell you something about Nan Marshall. There is no need, however, for she is not different from some two or three thousand other young women, making their living on the stage. Pretty? Yes, but so are the other two or three thousand. They have to be pretty. She is an Irish type, black hair, blue eyes, pinkish cheeks with the color paling and brightening, no doubt about that color being born with her, though you might be suspicious, seeing her moist carmine lips and her carefully trimmed eyebrows. Oh! well, even pretty girls think they can jolly nature and this is a tiny jolly. You might note her mouth and eyes, matching each other in humor and shrewdness. A genial heart, a clear, clever brain, no end of courage, a good figure, a pretty face—Nan Marshall.

At the door of her boarding house she glanced across the street and saw another man, a stranger, in the shadow of the opposite doorway.

"A new one on the job. I certainly got a horse on old Staats to-day."

One look told her that, while absent, her room had been ransacked. She paused in dismay, then locked the door,

took off her corsets and sewed the two safe deposit keys into their places and put a row of similar stitching on each of the other ribs of the garment. The keys were tight and moveless in their pockets and the corset gave not the slightest sign of concealing anything.

When dressed she called the landlady.

"Who was in my room?"

"Your father said he had left some papers with you."

"Oh, then it's all right. He seems to have had quite a search."

When the woman had gone, she thought it out. "They've got *him* on the job! Merry days ahead!"

A heavy step, an uncertain step that stopped now and again, sounded on the stairs, a knock at the door and a mumbling voice. "Let me in, Nan, I want to talk to you."

He was shabby, bleary-eyed, yet with the remains of swagger and assurance. His clothes were of the sporting cut, that attempts ultra, almost clerical respectability, assumed only by the gambler aristocrats. He had been mistaken more than once in the days of his prosperity for a liberal clergyman. The garments were threadbare and shiny. His boots were glossy but the cuffs of his shirt were ragged-edged. His nails had been recently manicured. With good clothes, clean linen, money in his pocket, without whiskey in his blood, Jim Marshall could still make a figure in certain circles. He sat and lighted a cigarette. As he smoked, the thumb and forefingers of his right hand, resting on the table seemed to be lifting and setting down stacks of something, playing with invisible counters.

"What's this I hear of you and young Staats Livingston?"

"Nothing much, except we're engaged to be married."

"Marriage? Marriage?"

He stopped suddenly, forgot to puff the smoke out of his mouth so that it drifted and spread over his face while he gazed at her open mouthed.

"Marriage?"

"I said marriage."

"The deuce!"

He picked up his stack of unseen counters, let them run out of his fingers and seemed to be puzzling out a problem.

"That diving girl suit in 'What a Time'?"

"Maybe."

"Old Staats Livingston's nephew and heir! Marriage! Some say the old man's worth twenty millions, some say forty millions." He drew in his breath with relish. "Millions and millions and just that one relative—lives with the old man too. Can you hold him to it?"

"We took out a license together."

The old man fell into deep thought, kept moving his counters about and letting them run out of his hand."

"Jim Marshall's daughter cops off a multi-millionaire's heir." He laughed mirthlessly and mumbled again, "Mar riage! Marriage!"

"Why do you keep saying 'marriage, marriage.' Why not? What else?"

"I give you my word, Nan, I don't know how to play the hand."

A slow, scornful smile broke the carmine of her lips.

"You see, Nan," Marshall continued, "we can make quite a decent roll right now by calling everything off. Still, I don't know but what the old man would come down harder after a marriage than before."

"How much have they offered you?"

Nan snapped this out suddenly and bent over to see its effect in his face. He started, seemed to have dropped his counters, for he made a motion of gathering them from the table, an old habit when agitated. The girl laughed as he betrayed himself.

"You were in here hunting for papers. You didn't find them, did you? How much did they offer?"

"You're too damned smart!"

"Come on, Dad, the price!"

"There's a cool twenty-five hundred in it."

At this she got up and walked to the window, turned back and laughed.

"You're holding out or else they think you're an awful piker. Twenty-five hundred! On the level, what did they offer? Come on, give it to me straight."

"Is it fifty-fifty, Nan?"

"Sure."

"Well, it's five thousand, then."

"Oh, Dad, do you think I'm worth only five thousand dollars? Listen. Go back and tell them that five thousand won't do. Not five times five, and that's twenty-five thousand."

"Twenty-five thousand dollars won't do," he said in a low, awed voice. "What's your price, Nan?"

"They're not for sale."

"Don't be a fool, Nan. Do you think for a moment they will let the daughter of a broken down old sporting man like Jim Marshall marry a young millionaire like Staats Livingston. You should have landed him before they were wise. You haven't a chance now."

"Why not?" she cried angrily. "Is there anything against me? Ain't I as good as any of them? Ain't I educated? Didn't I go to the convent for three years when you were rich and had your string in the old Morris Park days? I know I was only a kid then, but the influence has stuck all these years. Have you ever heard a word against me? I know the cats say I am smart and clever and get away with it and keep a nun's face on me, but you know and they know it's a lie. Don't I know more in a minute that he knows or ever will know? Sure, I do, and yet I love him for all that and he loves me and his letters and the license are not for sale. I'm going to be his wife."

"You're all right, Nan, you're all right. Don't get excited. You said you got a license. Why didn't you get married right away?"

"Why? I don't know except he wanted it on the quiet, some place I didn't know anything about and I wouldn't have it anywhere except in public in a church. Besides, I thought he ought to tell his folks. He didn't want the license first, afraid it would get out but I stuck for having everything on the level when we started."

The old man groaned.

"You've mussed it all up. Why didn't you put me on? Now, they've got the boy out of the country and it's good night."

"I'll wait till he comes back."

"He'll not come back till they've done you up. Don't be a fool, Nan. They'll frame up something on you, drag you into court, smash your reputation and then what good are your letters and your license? You'll never get a cent."

"I don't want their money. I want him. We want each other."

Her father's words were no surprise to the girl. She had known girls who thought they were safe till they were tangled in the net.

"Better give it up, girl. This fellow Staats is one powerful guy and he's out to stop this match and you haven't a show against him. Let me talk to his people and fix it up. He'll be liberal. He'll stand for the limit. Where are the letters?"

"They're not for sale."

"See here, Nan, if you think I'm going to be choused out of five thousand dollars when the money is right in my hand because a fool girl thinks she is in love, you have another guess. I want those letters."

"You won't get them, Dad, You needn't threaten. I'm too old to be beaten and you know you can't bully me. When the time comes to deliver I'll be the one to deliver."

"And I'll get my cut?"

"Oh! sure," she said wearily, "you'll get your cut."

Late in the afternoon Miss Marshall went down stairs and peered out of the hall window before she opened the door. The new shadow was in the usual place. At the corner a black moustached chap with heavy features suddenly stood in front of her, turned back the lapel of his coat and revealed a shiny shield, which he immediately covered again, and said in a hoarse whisper:

"The chief wants to see you. Come quietly and there won't be no fuss."

"Am I under arrest?"

The fellow hesitated. "Not exactly, but if you don't come quietly it will be an arrest. Take it easy and it will be over in a moment and no harm done. Come on, I have a taxi."

The girl shook her head. "Nothing doing in the taxi. I'll go in the cars or else you'll have to make it an arrest."

"All right. Come on."

The streets were crowded. The home rush had begun. Nan edged near a policeman with his back to the sidewalk, touched him on the arm.

"Officer," she said, "will you kindly tell me if this man is a policeman? Has he any right to take me with him?"

Officer O'Brien turned to look, but the fellow was gone. They saw him dart into the crowd and dodge behind a car.

"I thought he was a faker," she said as she told the policeman how he had accosted her and of his invitation. O'Brien was all admiration.

"Say, you're one wise little bird, all right. What's he after?"

"Just papers."

"A movie?"

"No," she laughed. "It's real life."

O'Brien reported this at the station He stopped Nan the next day.

"Why don't you go down to the station and have a talk with the captain He'd like to hear your story."

Nan's heart drummed. The police were to take a hand. She looked about her desperately.

"Don't be a'scared," said O'Brien "You can trust the captain. He's on the dead level with good girls. He's got three daughters of his own."

So Nan went to the station and told the captain the whole tale and her fear of a "frame-up."

"Huh!" he grunted when she had finished. "There'll be no frame put over on you in this precinct. Want some advice? You do? Go down to old Staats Livingston's office and have a show down. In a tight place there's nothing like a show down."

Nan felt this was good counsel. The strain had begun to worry her nerves. She found Livington's address in the

telephone book and wrote him a letter: "Dear Sir:

I have been to the police for protection against your detectives. They advise me to see you personally and have a show down. I'm not going to give up Staats nor his letters nor our marriage license, but I am willing to carry out all your conditions of waiting and not seeing him, or any other conditions. I'll make him a good wife.

Yours truly,

Anna Marshall."

Twenty-four hours later she received a typed note in the third person requesting Miss Marshall to call on Staats Livingston at the same address on Broadway to which she had written.

At the door of the office she hesitated. There might be treachery, but the halls, she noticed, were full of people moving about; the crowded elevators went up and down as regularly as rods in a piston, attendants were everywhere. It would be safe. She entered a large outer office and, giving her name, was ushered in immediately, conducted through several smaller offices and suddenly left on the threshold of a small room where an old, white haired man was sitting before a soft coal fire in a grate. Fifty years before, Staats Livingston had begun his business life in a three story brick building on this site with such a fire burning in his office, and when he put up a modern skyscraper with steam veins and electric arteries he gave orders that in his own room there should be such a grate and such a fire. The window looked out on the bare shrubbery and white grave stones of Trinity churchyard.

"Come in, Miss Marshall."

He stood up and welcomed her to a seat beside him. Perfectly straight he was, with a ruddy, weathered face, contrasting strangely with his hair. He had gray eyes which Nan thought could look into the sun. There was something formidable about him, some aura of domination that tokened a will not to be denied, yet with it, part of it, an amused contempt or disdain. He did not seem treacherous. The girl would have said he could be trusted, because he did not care, did not need to cheat. At the same time she felt he had not a spark of sentiment and would laugh if she talked of love. Altogether she had some confidence that when he heard her story he might do her justice.

The flames in the grate flickered and she felt her heart flutter with them.

"You wrote me about my nephew," he said, inviting her to begin.

"I think it's up to you to do the talking."

He leaned back in his chair and looked at her, amused.

"You wish to marry my nephew?"

"He wishes to marry me and would if you had not shipped him to Europe."

"Ah! Europe!"

He seemed to be studying something in the fire. Suddenly he looked up. Nan liked the expression of his eyes, though afraid she was soft clay in his hands.

"Perhaps the situation is more complicated than you think. I wish you would give me your version of the affair from beginning to end. I may not know it in all its bearings."

So Nan told him the whole story, how she objected to secrecy and had suggested the appeal to him for consent.

"You have with you, of course, the documents, the letters, the license, the

engagement ring to prove all you tell me?"

"Nothing doing," cried the girl, drawing away. "You've been trailing me, hounding me to get them and you don't think I'm fool enough to bring them in and hand them to you."

The old man almost winced at the slang, but he smiled a dry little smile and said:

"You are a very competent young person. What is it you wish me to do?"

"Call off your detectives and keep your promise."

"You are confident my nephew will marry you at the end of six months?"

Nan thought he was pitying her with the question.

"I am sure of it," she cried proudly. The gray eyes gave her such a queer look that Nan grew suspicious and hastily looked round her on all sides."

"You need not have any fear, Miss Marshall," he said, "there is no treachery here."

He had anticipated her thought.

"No treachery," he went on. "I think you were right in asking for"—he searched for the phrase—"a show down."

Livingston arose and Nan felt that he meant the interview to end. She also stood and was surprised to find him confronting her, barring her way.

"Miss Marshall," he said, "I am going to ask you a question that you may not like to answer. You are on the stage and they say many things about young women on the stage. Can you stand at the altar and marry an honorable man and look him straight in the eye at the same time?"

The girl's face flushed. Her eyes blazed. "That's an insult," was on her tongue, when he held up his hand and stopped her.

"Forgive me. Don't answer, Miss Marshall. Your eyes have answered."

He stretched out his hand and in spite of all she had felt he had done, Nan instantly took it.

"You seem to love my nephew?"

"I do love him," she said very simply.

"A very interesting situation," he mused. "Very interesting. I think the detectives will be"—he searched again for the phrase—"called off."

Nan was about to thank him when he went on:

"More than that, if Staats decides to marry you at the time you mention I will not object and I will be at the wedding."

Tears came into Nan's eyes. She grasped his hand, but his next words sent her heart down like lead.

"Do not cherish hopes too high. It is very complicated."

He bowed her out. Again he seemed amused but taken up also with some controlling thought as of one seeking to solve a problem and smiling to himself at its intricacies.

The detectives vanished. A week later Nan received another letter from the old man asking her to call at eleven the next morning, when the whole matter might be arranged. She was at his office on the stroke of the hour. Livingston welcomed her in his usual solemnly courteous manner. He gazed through the window at the bare branches and the white stones and the beautiful temple rising out of them. If the girl could have read that old world-experienced mind she would have known that he was still working on his amusing problem and trying to guess at the solution.

"What is going to happen this morning, Miss Marshall," he said, "may appear theatrical, but I think it will be best for all concerned. We are all to have a —show down!"

He touched a button on his deck. A door opened and a bright, beautiful, young woman, about Nan's age, with every mark of the wealthiest simplicity in her air and costume, came in and stood by Livingston. Her face was anxious, haughty, contemptuous.

"Ethel, this is the young woman. Miss Marshall, Miss Allerton."

The girl turned her face away from the introduction. Nan gazed wildly. She felt in a trap. Who was this girl of wealth and station? What was this humorously solemn old man preparing for her?

"Sit down, Ethel."

"I prefer to stand, Guardy dear. This is very trying and very distasteful and I think unnecessary. I hope it will be over soon."

"Please be seated, dear. I am acting only for your own sake. Your father was my dearest, my only friend. I promised him to look after you against all the world and I will keep my word even if it should be against my own blood. Ethel, you must know exactly the kind of man you are taking when you marry Staats."

Nan started. This was the explanation. She was a sacrifice. That powerful old man had come between her and her love and was forcing upon young Staats, his ward whose "Guardy dear" revealed their relation.

"I think I do know," said the girl. "You have told me all this woman's story. You seem to believe her. I do not. Even if true, we know that good men, like Staats, are often trapped by designing——"

Nan sprang to her feet.

"Just a moment, Miss Marshall," interrupted Livingston. "Pray, sit down. Miss Allerton does not mean to say anything offensive. I must tell you Miss Allerton's story. My nephew Staats has asked her to be his wife. For several months now they have been formally engaged to be married."

The room did not reel, the figures of the man and the woman did not blur; all Nan's senses were keen, but she could not understand, could not take in that at the very moment Staats was writing her passionate love letters, getting a license to marry her, he was engaged to this girl. He must have tired of her when he met Nan. She felt sorry for Miss Allerton. It was wicked of Staats to have played such a trick upon his uncle's beautiful ward; he should have told her the truth before he left for Europe.

Her brain became more confused. Europe? The six months' probation? The uncle must have known. Why did he not tell this girl?

"When Staats comes back from Europe——"

Nan had hardly got this far when Miss Allerton laughed.

"You see, Guardy, she does not know. Staats has evidently been trying to get loose from her. I do not need to stay any longer, do I? There is nothing more?"

"Just a moment, dear."

The button on his desk summoned another clerk.

"He has arrived? Show him in by the other door."

A moment later that door was opened

and young Livingston stood in the room.

"Staats!"

Nan sprang to her feet with a glad cry and held forth her hands. Miss Allerton went over to his side. There could be no doubt of her right of possession. Staats stopped. He would have made a quick retreat, but the old man moved over betwen him and the door. The youth would not look at Nan, nor at any of them, but snarled:

"What kind of game is this?"

Nan tried to catch his eye and read there that he would explain, take her by the hand and proclaim her. Notwithstanding the other girl's attitude by her lover's side she did not suspect treachery or baseness. Perhaps he was feeble before the strong will of his uncle, determined to cast her out and bind his nephew to the woman of wealth and position. She had no fear of the old man or of the young woman. If she could only get Staats' attention she felt she could brace him up for battle with both. Why did he stay near the other woman when his place was by her side?

The youth slunk into a chair. Miss Allerton put her hand on his shoulder. She was trying to strengthen him for the conflict and she had the position of vantage. Nan was the struggling wrestler seeking to break a hold.

The old man's voice broke the tensity.

"There are four of us here, my nephew Staats, my ward Miss Allerton, Miss Marshall and myself. I have thought it best to have this situation settled privately and to have each of us know where the other stands and especially that you, Ethel, might choose with your eyes open."

A show down without a doubt!

"There is no need to restate the facts. We all have spoken except Staats. It is for Staats to speak."

"Staats will say nothing," cried Miss Allerton. "Why should we be compelled to listen to this common woman's story? I should think you would rather call in the police and give her up as a blackmailer."

"I had thought of that at first," said the old man. "When Miss Marshall came to me with her story I was strongly tempted to do as you suggest but I had her story investigated and her story is truth. You see what a very complicated situation arose. I did not think we would care to thrash that out in court."

"Then pay her price and send her away!"

Nan stood again. Old Staats went to her side, asked her to take her seat.

"The trouble is, Ethel, that Miss Marshall refuses every price."

"What *does* she want?"

"I want Staats to tell the truth!" cried Nan.

"Yes, let us have the truth?" repeated Livingston. "Let's us have *all* the truth. It *is* true, Ethel, that some one has conspired against Miss Marshall, that she has been tracked and trailed, that her hand bag was cut open, that her room was ransacked, that offers of large sums were made to people near her for the license and the letters, that an attempt was made to lure her to some office where she might be searched. She thinks I did all that. I never heard of Miss Marshall till she wrote me."

He turned towards Nan and spread out his hands in deprecation of such an accusation. He seemed more of an interested spectator than a participant in the game.

"I feel sure," the old man continued,

"that Staats can throw some light on these transactions."

—"Say nothing, Staats," commanded Ethel. "The woman will use it against you."

Miss Allerton was a New York girl reared in an atmosphere supposed to be very pure and very clean, an atmosphere very different from that of cabaret dancers and broken down sports in cheap boarding houses where Miss Marshall had spent all her life except for the few years in the quiet convent; yet the rich refined girl had guessed the real situation when she first heard the story, while the sense of it was only now coming to Nan. To Miss Allerton, it was clear, this was a connection of bachelorhood which had got Staats into trouble. She had heard many stories like that about young fellows, and old fellows, too, in her circle. It was very disagreeable that her guardian had projected her into this sorry and sordid situation but he always had queer, old fashioned notions about honor and chivalry and playing the game and seemed to think now that it was his duty to show her a page of Staats's private life. If he thought this would lead her to give up her marriage he was mistaken. She had no intention of relinquishing Staats for a mere modern peccadillo. His life would be different after their wedding.

All this time Nan had said not a word. Her early sorrow for his deception of Miss Allerton changed into a hot anger as she saw what he had intended against her, how he had even tried, to the length of a license, to lure her and how when he had failed he had invented the story of his uncle's opposition and then had had her trailed and planned trickery to get the evidence of his treachery. She came to herself as she heard Miss Allerton say:

"If Staats has made a mistake, he is willing to pay. How much do you want?"

The bitter insult strung Nan.

"Staats," she cried in a whisper. "It's up to you. Is there an explanation?"

No answer.

"Yes, it is for Staats to end this," said the old man. "Staats, which of these young women do you wish to make your wife?"

Silence.

"Not me!" cried Nan. "I'd sooner marry a convict!"

She turned on Ethel Allerton, looked at her slowly and laughed in her face as she pointed to him.

"You take him!" she said. "You're rich and can afford the breed. I know the breed but I did not think he belonged. You seem to like him. Take him! Compliments of Miss Marshall!"

Nan swept to the door. The old man held it open with deference.

"You come out of this with honor," he said. "I wish you all happiness."

"Thanks. I believe you're on the level yourself."

So she went out, and she never saw one of them again.

THE New York newspapers had many interesting details of Ethel Allerton's marriage to Staats Livingston. They missed this one. The morning of the ceremony, old Staats received a package by express from Newark, N. J., containing an engagement ring, a brooch, a pearl ring, twenty letters to "Dearest Nan" and a marriage license. On a slip of paper were the words:

"FOR THE BRIDE—COMPLIMENTS OF MISS MARSHALL."

On Approval

By RAMSEY BENSON

THE house in New York was persuaded that Mrs. Montgomery Badger, of Cleofonte, Ark., had only to clap eyes on the necklace and she would never be happy thereafter until she might call it her very own. The price was $10,000, rather a pretty penny, but by every token Montgomery Badger had it to spare and that he would come across the house didn't seriously doubt. It was informed; it knew that Badger was some years older than his wife and that they weren't long married, and these circumstances, by every law of probability, ought to make him a fond and indulgent husband. Of course, there was risk. Because a necklace might easily be so broken up as to defy identification, it wasn't just the thing to be sending about; but on the other hand the house couldn't afford to lose a sale and that consideration was decisive. The jewels were packed with great care, sealed with seven seals, more or less, and turned over to the express company to be delivered to Mrs. Badger in Cleofonte.

They wrote, too, as pretty a letter as they could cook up. They presented their best compliments to Mrs. Badger in a florid and obsequious manner and begged to direct her attention to a necklace which they were making so bold as to send her. They ventured in all humility to harbor the hope that she would be pleased with the necklace. They mentioned the price and, if she would pardon the liberty, dared say it was a very reasonable price. They didn't tell her what to do if she chose not to keep the necklace. If they had any such contingency in mind they didn't speak of it.

The Montgomery Badgers were just sitting down to breakfast when the maid brought the letter, along with the morning's mail. The house in New York adorned its stationery with a showy crest and Badger studied it a moment before he tossed the letter across the table to his wife. He didn't speak. Neither did she. As a matter of fact they weren't on speaking terms and hadn't been for two whole days. Nor was that anything so very unusual. Sometimes they went a week without a word passing between them.

Badger glanced at his handful of letters, crushed a few of them into his pocket and threw the rest into the fireplace, bolted his breakfast and left the house. Mrs. Badger called the maid.

"Marie," she directed, "go over to the express office and see if there's a package for me."

There was. Marie came back with it in about ten minutes and in less than a minute more Mrs. Badger had the seals broken and the wrapping stripped off. The effect was positively stunning. She stood back and wrung her hands in an ecstasy of wonder and admiration. She took the necklace in her hand and held it up to the sunlight. More ecstasy. Finally she put it on. Ecstasy beyond the power of words to express!

No miscalculation there. Mrs. Mont-

gomery Badger was taken captive. "I simply can't live without it!" she cried out, and gave herself up to raptures.

When Badger came home to lunch his wife met him at the threshold. She had been crying. Her pretty face was full of pathos and appeal. She had all the look of a woman tired of feeding on the husks of indifference and hungry for love. She clasped both her hands about her husband's arm and nestled against him. "Dearest!" she cooed, and choked with her tender emotions.

It wasn't badly done, but it didn't quite fetch. A man may be a bear in some respects and not in others. Besides a bear isn't so easily fooled when he is in temper. "You're trying to put something over and I know what it is!" snarled Badger.

She let go of his arm as if it had suddenly turned burning hot under her fingers.

"You want money! 'Dearest' indeed!" barked Badger and flung off his overcoat.

She went white and then red. She was so angry that she could hardly get her breath.

"You want money! You want more jewelry—some more gewgaws to strut about in to make yourself out a queen. You get no more money! You've got gewgaws enough!" So saying Montgomery Badger stamped into the dining room.

Mrs. Badger didn't lunch that day. She gave her husband's back a look fit to strike fire with its intensity, gulped hard and then, when the tears wouldn't be held back, turned and fled to her room.

It wasn't the first humiliation she had suffered at the hands of her lord and master, but it was about the worst, and she was stung to a reckless disregard of consequences. She didn't care what she did so long as it was something spiteful. The jewels lay as she had left them and they flashed up at her mockingly; in a way she admitted these baubles so ardently desired and so out of her reach to a share of the hatred she felt for the brute downstairs. A wanton impulse mastered her. She snatched up the necklace, huddled it into two or three sheets of notepaper and tied it hastily about with common thread. It made a rough and knobby packet with no flat surface, but she managed somehow to scrawl the house's address on the wrapper.

She summoned the maid. "Take this over to the postoffice and mail it," she snapped. "If they ask what's in it tell them merchandise."

THE Tin Plate run paid the mail clerk $100 a month, and that was money enough for Tom Bailey until the luck broke so sharply against him.

Tom was certainly getting the heavy end of the stick those days. Of course the fact that a man needs the money is no excuse, but it does affect his outlook. Give a man who needs the money a chance at some money—well, the hooks are in a way to get mixed up with the crooks, and after that no telling what may happen.

Tom Bailey needed the money no denying that. For more than a year his wife hadn't been well enough to hold her baby, let alone do the housework. Two operations hadn't made her any better but they had made Tom a lot poorer, and as if that weren't grief enough his sister lost her husband and was left destitute with two small children. The sister saved the wages of a cook and a nurse, but she

brought three hungry mouths to feed and Tom saw his savings vanish like mist before the morning sun.

He pledged his house and borrowed $500, but the money was gone almost sooner than the telling. It went to pay old debts and there was no prospect that it could be itself repaid. It would fall due in a few weeks now and Tom foresaw nothing but the loss of the very roof over his head.

It was Tom's run that night and his frame of mind was what you might term edgy. His trials and tribulations had got him worn down to the point where a very little was enough to upset him. The fact that the train had passed a good many stations without stopping couldn't be counted much, as a fact, but it was getting on Tom's nerves notwithstanding. Six stations hand running, and Tom swore right out at the sixth. There was no reason why he should dislike to put out his hook to catch up the mail sack; until now he had never been aware that he did dislike to do so, yet here he was quivering with a sense of injury. Nerves, of course, worn down by his trials and tribulations.

Six stations and then Cleofonte! Cleofonte was some dot on the map, as dots went in that neck of the woods, and Tom had a right to expect the train to stop there. Almost always it did stop, for passengers or express or both. The driver blew his long blast as he drew near the station and Tom listened rather confidently for the three short blasts which should acknowledge the conductor's signal to stop. Tom didn't want to put out his hook at Cleofonte. He was tired of putting out his hook, and worried and ready to go to pieces. So he listened for those three short blasts eagerly and confidently. Nothing doing. The long blast tore a hole in the night and that was all.

Tom slammed the door open. He swore frightfully.

The hook is thought to be a foolproof contrivance. Certainly it cannot easily be made to go wrong. But shattered nerves are even harder to anticipate than folly itself, and anyway the hook went wrong for once. The train was running fast and that helped to ball things up. The brakes hissed under the car but without slackening the speed much. The switchlights flashed past and Tom kicked out the Cleonfonte sack at random with a brief thrill of exultation in the thought that somebody would have to hunt for it. He swung the hook and it caught up the outgoing sack. But something went wrong somewhere and the upshot was that when Tom swung the hook back into the car the sack was so wound up that he had to cut it to get it free.

The shock had made a mess of the mail inside. A bunch of long letters had been torn almost across, and letters tied up together that way don't tear easily either. It was part of the Badger Investment Company's mail—deeds and other documents of importance. Less important were numbers of newspapers separated from their wrappers. Work and worry for Tom.

But the worst was yet to come. When the mass of mail tumbled out of the sack something hard plunked down on the table, but Tom didn't discover what it was till he had run the heap pretty well through. He had patched up the letters and papers after a fashion and distributed each piece to its proper sack and he turned back to the table with some sense of satisfaction in having the

job off his hands. He heaved a little sigh of relief, in fact. Or rather he started to heave it, caught his breath in the midst of it and stood staring down at the table in astonishment.

A diamond necklace, a thing of marvelous splendor, flashing like living fire under the smoky lights, lay there. It was part of the mail—that something hard which had plunked down. Still clinging to it were some strands of common thread and tangled up with the thread some sheets of crumpled notepaper that had been its wrappings, and they were not the least astonishing part. Who could have been so stupid or so reckless as to have entrusted such jewels to the open mail, unregistered, and so insecurely wrapped?

But Tom came out of his trance—it was easier to come out of that than the deep rut of habit which had held him so long. He was enormously startled, but he didn't forget what was expected of him. His first concern was to find the address of the party to whom the necklace was consigned and he found it. It was scrawled on a sheet of the notepaper and though the sheet had been torn across both ways he made out that the jewels were going to a firm in New York. The address being found the next thing in the way of the rut was to fix the consignment up in a secure package for forwarding, and he did that. He found a stout little box and laid the necklace in it, packing the jewels tightly about with soft paper. He pressed the cover down and tied it with strong twine and wrote the address plainly on the outside.

But while he was doing these habitual things his thoughts strayed. They were confined to no wonted channel, like his actions. He wondered more and more how the necklace happened to be in the open mail. Of course there could be no doubt about the great value of the gems; anybody could see that they were worth a lot of money. Tom knew nothing about precious stones but there was that in the flash of these diamonds which left him in no doubt as to their being valuable. He wondered at length if they mightn't be worth as much as $500.

That sum had been running in his mind. The mortgage on his home, about to be foreclosed, was for $500.

Ordinarily Tom kept the eastern mail with him till the end of the run, but that night he had orders to transfer it to the Iron Mountain. That was because of the floods. The Mississippi was reported thirty miles wide at Cairo and still rising, and there was so much uncertainty about the Tin Plate being able to reach Memphis that the department chose not to take the risk. The Tin Plate crosses the Iron Mountain at Devil's Own and by making the transfer there the eastern mail went up to St. Louis where the crossing was relatively good.

Tom tried not to think of the mortgage on his home for his thoughts in that connection strayed so far afield they scared him. Having finished the package he tossed it into the sack with the rest of the eastern mail and when, after a few minutes, he went and fished it out he could say to himself that he was in nowise actuated by a consideration of the mortgage. What actuated him, he told himself, were sundry misgivings as to his duty in the premises. Here was a piece of jewelry of great value so insecurely wrapped that the consignment had fallen open in his hands. Ought he not to keep the consignment in his possession until he reached Memphis and

there turn it over to the superintendent of mails with a report of the facts? Had he, a mere clerk, the right to take upon himself the responsibility of forwarding a consignment of so extraordinary a character?

The train had to stop at Devil's Own because it was a crossing. No monkeying with the hook there. It was a crossing and the law required the train to stop. The agent came out with his lantern and took the mail. Tom called his attention to the eastern sack which he was ordered to leave for transfer to the Iron Mountain. The agent understood. He had his orders too.

The necklace wasn't in the sack. It was in Tom's pocket.

They reached Memphis after all, in spite of the poor prospects, late but safe and sound. The morning papers made something of an ado over the perilous trip and they played up especially an interview with the driver out in front, wherein he detailed some thrilling experiences. These experiences were mostly news to Tom, back in the mail car. He read the papers and fancied the driver was romancing. Concerning the driver Tom couldn't forget that if he hadn't run through Cleofonte so fast the worried clerk in the mailcar wouldn't have had his worries multiplied by knowing what was in the knobby package of notepaper tied up with common thread. The driver's perils didn't appeal to Tom. He had perils of his own, though they should be of a sort which might or might not interest the newspapers.

Tom didn't go to bed because he knew without trying that he couldn't sleep. He didn't try to eat either; he wasn't hungry though he hadn't tasted a morsel all night. He left the train at the station and went wandering about, aimlessly. He pretended to himself that he was killing time. The superintendent of mails wouldn't be in his office yet awhile and Tom pretended to himself that he was waiting to report to him personally. It was a poor pretense. He was waiting for no such thing. Long after the superintendent showed up at his office Tom was still wandering.

He passed a pawnshop. A fat little Jew stood in the doorway and smiled oilily. "'Ting to-day?" he whined.

"I bet he's a fence for thieves," thought Tom, and averted his eyes.

He passed by but he hadn't gone half a block till he faced about and went back. He went back and entered the pawnshop.

The Jew stood behind his counter. Tom took the box out of his pocket, untied the string and lifted the cover. "What is it worth?" he asked.

The Jew picked the necklace up and handled it over, stone by stone. His face was like a block of wood. "Gif you tousan' dollar," he croaked.

If the Jew was willing to pay a thousand the thing couldn't be worth less than ten times as much. Tom knew something about pawnbrokers. Ten thousand dollars? The shop spun round like a top. Tom glared at the Jew, glared a moment, then snatched up the necklace and fled, crushing the jewels back into the box as he went. He ran as if a ravening lion had been after him.

The pawnbroker sprang out like a spider in pursuit of a fly. "Fifteen hunder!" he panted, and caught Tom by the coat.

He clung like grim death, too. Tom was weak and breathless with shock, so that he staggered as he ran. Weakly he

struck the Jew's hand to make him let go and went sick with fright at the thought that he was caught even as a fly in a spider's clutches. But he made his escape at last. The pawnbroker, fat and wheezy and unused to running that way, was spent as well. Besides he had to think of his shop. "Dwo tousan'!" he screamed after Tom, and gave up the chase.

Two thousand dollars—fifteen hundred over and above the amount of the mortgage!

There were saloons thereabouts, no end of them. Nobody had less use for them than Tom Bailey, ordinarily. He had never tasted strong drink, in fact, but he had heard that it braced a fellow and he needed bracing. He was weak as a rag.

He went into the next saloon and so unacquainted was he with the usage in such places that he didn't know in the least what to call for. A bartender leaned over the bar and all Tom could think of was rum till he caught sight of a label on a bottle and being so prompted ordered whiskey. The bartender set out a bottle and a glass and only that there was another customer pouring his own drink Tom wouldn't have known what to do.

He poured out his drink and his hand shook so that the neck of the bottle rattled against the rim of the glass. But men with shaking hands were common in those precincts and neither the bartender nor the other customer paid any attention to Tom. A newspaper lay near him on the bar and Tom drew it toward him, pretending that something in it had caught his eye. He was afraid to drink and the newspaper was a trick to cover his confusion.

He glanced up and down the columns. He wasn't reading, only pretending to read. But right away, as his eye roved up and down, something did catch it. No pretense now—his eye was caught and held. He read:

MAIL SACKS BURNED

St. Louis, April 3.—The Iron Mountain offices report that the Tin Plate station at Devil's Own, Ark., was burned late last night. Several sacks of mail were destroyed, among them a sack of eastern mail left by the Memphis local for transfer to the Iron Mountain on account of the floods.

Tom bolted out of the saloon, leaving his whiskey untouched. It was the third or fourth hard jolt he had received within a few hours and the hardest of the series. It was a wonder he didn't crumple right down. But instead of crumpling down he bolted out.

Perhaps you can put yourself in his place. The burning of that mail-sack at Devil's Own covered his tracks completely. Nobody in the wide world but himself knew that the necklace hadn't been destroyed by the fire. A tracer would be sent out, but a tracer would locate the consignment in that sack. He might do with the jewels as he liked and run no risk of being found out. Nothing but his own conscience stood between him and the thing he was tempted to do.

If you put yourself in Tom's place perhaps you can figure out what happened. A man doesn't often find himself in a position where the whole burden of keeping him straight rests on his conscience. It was a new experience for Tom. He has never been able to figure it out for himself, but the best he makes of it is that when he read about the fire and the fear of being found out fell

away, his conscience simply got under the load and walked off with it.

Anyhow he didn't go back to the Jew, though he was headed that way when he bought the whiskey to brace him. Neither did he go to the superintendent of mails. In ten minutes he was standing in front of the weighing window of the Memphis post office. "How much?" he asked and handed the box over to the clerk.

The clerk read the address. "Merchandise?"

"Merchandise."

"Fifth zone—under one pound but over eight ounces—eight cents."

That and the price of the drink he never drank were what it cost Tom in money, but he came out of the fray feeling as if he had bruises all over him.

WITH reference to their not infrequent tiffs the Montgomery Badgers had a regular program. These tiffs were like showers in summer. The clouds rolled up black and menacing, the lightening flashed and the thunder rattled, the wind blew and the rain descended; but presently the sun broke through, the skies cleared, and life, thus disburdened of its sultry vapors, was once more sweet as a perfect day.

There was no departure now. Montgomery Badger had never acted more the bear and Mrs. Montgomery Badger's resentment had never flamed higher, but in just a few days they had kissed and made up and were as if no storm had come between them.

Badger always wanted to do something handsome after a tiff. He proposed that the necklace be sent for, but Mrs. Badger wouldn't have it so; she wanted to do something handsome likewise and she insisted that $10,000 was too much to pay for mere adornment. That looked like a deadlock, but right away Badger had a happy thought. He communicated it to Mrs. Badger and she clapped her hands. "Oh, splendid!" she exclaimed, and Badger went back to his office chuckling.

At the office he got out a bunch of files and called the field manager over. "Jenks," quoth he, "you know about these mortgages. Tell me about this one." He picked up a paper at random and read off the notation on the outside: "Thomas Bailey, mortgagor—$500."

Jenks consulted a little book he carried in his pocket. "Thomas Bailey," he explained, "is a mailclerk on the Tin Plate. He's a good fellow, as far as I can find out. He'll pay if he can."

"Hum! How does he happen to be borrowing money? Automobile?"

"No, run of hard luck. Sickness in his family."

"Well, I guess he'll do," remarked Montgomery Badger and dipped his pen in red ink and wrote across the face of the mortgage:

"Canceled. Compliments of Mrs. Montgomery Badger."

He handed the document over to a clerk. "Execute a release and forward both papers to Mr. Bailey," he directed.

The $5,000.00 BLACK CAT Prize Short Story Contest Conditions will be announced in the January number.

One Night at Pap's

By IVIE A. MacCARTHY

IT happened at Pap's. You do not know Pap's. Neither would I had I not become friendly with the first officer on the boat going over and accepted his invitation to see something of the life along the polyglot water front of Singapore.

Pap's is not an inviting place. It is small and mean, hot and reeking with smells of badly trimmed oil lamps, stale liquor and bad tobacco. It's behind the scene of life's drama, and the unpainted side of the canvas is bald and ugly, but the actors that cross its stage have played life in all its phases, from the highest to the lowest, and they hold a certain fascination for one who seeks to know life.

Pap's would look like a thousand other places of its kind, but for a few exceptions. There is a variegated band that spans the length of one wall, the skin of one of the monstrous snakes that make the peninsula its home. And on the opposite wall is a spread of horns from a water buffalo that almost embraces the room. And besides, there is Pap. Pap's is Pap's because of him. He is an American by birth—his real name is not known—but there are marks about him that speak of life on a higher level. He has, however, fitted himself into this dark corner with rare adaptability. He can mix a drink fit for a king, or a pick-me-up that would steady a ship in a storm.

He knows, to the drop, the appetite of every man who frequents his place; what is more, he is Pap to every man Jack of them. He advises, helps, bullies and backs every man according to his needs. A man who can call Pap a friend, knows where to go for assistance ever after.

But it wasn't about Pap that I was ultimately concerned. I give you these details because I think it was the intangible something about Pap's that opened the flood gates of the man's soul, who told the story.

The officer and I had been watching the tide of derelicts that flowed between the swinging doors, for several hours, until it was very late, in fact, and few interesting characters remained. Strange to say, the few were huddled together in one corner. We had just ordered another iced fortification against the deadly heat, when the sagging doors were thrown open with a bang, and a man, a veritable mastodon of a man, lurched in. He steered his mountain of flesh toward the bar, by a series of tacks, and in a thundering voice, ordered a whiskey straight.

Pap deftly poured the glowing liquor and setting it before the man, addressed him with a respectfulness that the man's appearance scarcely warranted. My interest was caught.

The man took no notice of Pap's words, but seized the drink eagerly. His unsteady hand bore the glass upward, but it swung round in spasmodic jerks, evading the gaping mouth. With a snarl, he bobbed his head toward the elusive glass, but again it escaped him. Another try and the glass collided with

his chin, and the liquor slopped over and down his clothes.

Somebody, doubtless "over seas" himself, laughed.

Instantly, the huge figure whirled round, the glass crashing to the floor.

"Laugh, you damn fool!" he bellowed with the voice of a bull. Then, as if a sudden thought had sobered him, he went on in a lowered voice, not altogether unpleasant: "Yes, laugh if it's funny. Laugh while you can. I could laugh once. Now seven thousand devils' eyes laugh at me instead." He gripped the edge of the bar to steady himself and again his voice thundered out. "Maybe it looks funny to see me, that was captain of the Princess, spilling my drink like a swill pail in a storm, but it ain't. With a wide sweep of his arm he drew his sleeve across his face, wiping away the sweat that trickled down his polished brow into his eyes.

The man's wild words attracted the attention of the few loafers and they watched him curiously.

The huge figure swayed, then straightened. "You laughed at me, did you? Well, I'll spoil your laugh. Let me tell you something."

He seemed suddenly to pull himself together and walked toward us with a comparatively firm step, sinking into a chair as he reached the table next to ours. The chair creaked complainingly and the table wobbled as his weight bore upon it. Pap hurried out from behind his bar and put a glass in the man's hand, saying, "Drink, Captain."

The captain, so addressed, drank the milky liquid, which had the pungent odor of ammonia, and then sat silent for a moment, seemingly to collect his thoughts.

I seized the opportunity to study the man while my scrutiny would pass unnoticed. There was something almost terrific in his huge size, an ogre from out some old tale, but his fierceness had been vanquished by fat. His features were but little round islands in a sea of fat—fat that might at one time have been powerful muscles, but whose fibre had long since been dissolved by alcohol into gross flabbiness that quavered like jelly. My impulses hovered between a smile and grunt of disgust, but when the man spoke, there was something in his voice that aroused my curiosity.

"There wasn't seven thousand eyes at first," he began, in a reminiscent tone, his eyes staring straight in front of him as if they looked into the past. "There was only a hundred and fifty. A pair belonging to each of seventy-five Chinese. But I'm running on.

"Maybe you don't know West River," he continued in a matter-of-fact directness. "Well, it means something in shipping circles. Only a good man gets command of a boat making Wuchow and back to Hong Kong with its valuable cargoes. I had the biggest boat of the line." For a moment the man straightened his sagging flesh into a certain semblance of dignity that suggested a once commanding presence.

His touch of conceit I forgave in a feeling of compassion as I pictured what a figure of a man he must one time have been. The next minute I pitied him as he continued in a disheartened voice:

"I don't know why I'm telling this. I ain't got any right to say I've been—but you're not going to bother about lookin' up who I am—and maybe you'll not laugh at the next fellow that's down

and out. Talking helps a fellow sometimes."

The man's speech only added to my curiosity. And, too, I marveled at the coherence. I had thought as I watched his swaying figure that he was thoroughly drunk, but I now decided that he was one of those men who are drunk on their feet, but when seated, seem scarcely to show the effect of liquor. My thoughts were, however, not concerned with physiological problems. I cared most to hear his story. And encouraging him I said, "You are right—talking is sometimes a bracer."

"So it is," he replied hopefully, then lapsed into silence again, but only for a moment. "I was up West River, and that river has got some scenery, too," he went on, with more enthusiasm. "According to the few travellers who venture up there, it beats the Rhine, with its long reaches and sudden turns, its narrow gorges frowned upon by great cliffs, its queer rock formations and its lofty mountains crowned with temples to their devils—but it's up country in China where white people are scarcer than archangels in hell; except now and then, a flat-bellied, pale-faced missionary, preaching Christianity to the heathen Chinese. But there were villages enough—vile places full of dirt, dogs and children, smelling worse than bilge water, and the boat called at every one of them. As soon as we slowed up, there would be a swarm of sampans around the boat, so that you couldn't see the water for a hundred yards—the lot of them filled with jabbering, squealing coolies, fighting to get their stuff on the boat, like hungry dogs over a bone.

"Our boat wasn't manned for Christians. The chief engineer was the only other white man on board. The mates were Hindoos and the crew Chinese. The divine right of the white man was all that kept the dirty beggars in their places. Two white men against a crew of twenty and several hundred yellow devils every time we dropped anchor, showed what it meant to be a white man.

"It was along about the first of July, and we had made Wuchow and were on the way down with a valuable cargo, a big consignment of money and one passenger, a missionary, Dr. Mason.

"I ain't much on missionaries, but the doctor was a man besides, and even the yellow men knew it and gave him a kind of respect out of their miserable souls that was surprising. It was a relief to have somebody to talk to, at any rate, and I wasn't sorry he was making the trip. He mentioned some reports he had heard of pirates, but I didn't take no stock in what he said. I had heard some rumors myself, but you can get those any day up West River. And English boats hadn't anything to fear, as they kept their pirating to their own people.

"Second day down, at Luk Ti, we took on seventy-five Chinese passengers. This was a big crowd of passengers, but I didn't see anything about them to get excited over. I looked at them carefully, though, and camped them forward on the lower deck. It was hotter than the devil's frying pan, and from where the doctor and I took our seats forward on the upper deck, we could smell the oil stewing on the hot bodies of the heathens down below.

"Do you know that smell?" he asked sharply, leaning toward us and looking searchingly into our faces. Receiving no answer he went on quickly. "It always means Chinese. It's on their hair,

their clothes, their furniture, on everything made or handled by them. You would know it if you met it at the North Pole.

"We were smelling our own sweat, too, that day, it was so all-fired hot. Between the smells and the heat we weren't wanting much to eat, but about the time the sun dropped behind the Marble Hills, the boy said dinner was ready, so the doctor, the engineer, and I sat down to mess. The dining salon was on the upper deck, just back of my cabin and the two passenger cabins. The upper deck was mostly space, there being nothing between the forward cabins and the engine room, and through the windows you could see almost the whole deck."

The man paused in his story and wiped the great drops of perspiration from his forehead. Behind this most natural action, I fancied I could see an effort to brace himself for the rest of his story. When he spoke again the effort was apparent in his voice, its tone higher pitched and harsh.

"We were having curry, when hell broke loose. We jumped to our feet and through the port holes we saw them Chinese passengers bearing down on us like flying fiends out of a nightmare, yowling and screeching like bedlam come; their little brown eyes glittering like sparks of hell fire; their pig-tails cracking and shirt tails flapping.

"If we hadn't had rumors of pirates, we'd have known what we were up against any way, and it didn't take no second thought to bolt the doors and fasten the port shutters. Then they were on us. They stormed around the cabin like a hurricane, shouting seven kinds of Chinese and pidgin English that was fair ear-splitting, with a tattoo on the doors to make it impressive.

"The leader hushed them up long enough to tell us that they wanted the money and that I'd either give them the key to the strong box or they would take it and feed us to the river gods.

"Well, it was a fine chance we had, three white men against a horde of Chinese devils, but I wasn't going to hand anything to those heathens just for the asking, and I told them they would get only what they took and I'd see them damned and beheaded if they dared to take anything. Talk was all very well, but in the dining salon we didn't have a gun between us and that salon didn't empty anywhere but on deck. We were like rats in a trap. There was some more talk on both sides, but ours didn't have much kick to it, and they were getting restless.

"Then I smelled a 'stink pot.' Know what that is? It's a death smell: pitch and rosin, gunpowder, assafoetida, sulphur and a few other things, smoking with a fume that will kill you before you can say 'Jack Robinson.' It meant they were going to take no chances in fighting us, but put up a few of them things and set by like a cat at a rat hole and wait for us to die or make a run for it. Them heathens are too cowardly to rush anything. They didn't know we wasn't armed, and they figured to get what they wanted without a scratch.

"They smashed in one of the port shutters and threw in several of them stink pots. We could have fired them out again but in that cubby hole we'd have died at the game in a few minutes, so we made a run for it. Noise means something to a coward, and with a whoop like a regiment of us, we opened the

door and beat our way through them.

"My dander was up and as I went through, I left a trail. I put my head into one fellow's spleen—you can kill those rice-eating Chinamen with a thumb-dig in the spleen—I sent another flying over the rail, broke another's head and left a dent in a few others. The doctor slipped around me and into the cabin, but the engineer disappeared. The doctor had his gun by that time and got in some good work. Then they let fly at us and the doctor soon went down with a groan. I took the revolver next and put a few more of them flat. They soon got me, too, through the belly, and as I stopped firing they burst in the door and hauled me out."

The man made a grimace of revulsion, his eyes glittering and teeth showing, but he scarcely hesitated in his narrative.

"It ain't good to have an imagination, but I could see what was coming to me right then, so I played dead.

"They stretched me out on deck and the long greasy fingers wriggled over me and into my pockets, but that being too slow, they tore my clothes off. The hot oily smell of them fair suffocated me and a nasty queue dragged across my face like a slimy eel. I felt their little eyes boring right through my lids and I thought surely they could tell I wasn't dead. But they were too busy to use their wits. When they got the key to the strong box, the most of them went off on a run, but there was an account against me and some stayed to settle it. The hellish cowards kicked me and jumped on me till I most ceased to feel anything. Then I thought of my little motherless girl and just made up my mind that they couldn't kill me. I played dead like a real dead one—but it wasn't easy. Them Chinese are all muscle, and they've got legs like an ostrich, a fighting mule and a battering ram, all in one, and every time they landed on me, it seemed I could hear my bones crack. But it was getting pretty dark and they couldn't see if I winced.

"Fortunately, there was a burst of yelling somewhere off about my cabin, and the devils scampered off like a lot of rats for a carcass. I was left alone. Cautiously, I sat up and looked about. I thought I could make for the rail and take my chances in the water, but moving was something awful. The blood was running out the wound like out of an open spigot. I felt weak, but I pulled myself along about three feet. Then the yelling came my way again, and as I dropped back on deck, a dozen or so howling devils came around the cabin with a burning torch. I braced myself for a touch of fire, but they were in too much of a hurry for me. I only got a few kicks as they went by; one landing on my cheek bone, took most of my face with it, and on they went, jabbering and howling down the deck.

"I wondered what they had done to the doctor. I listened for a sound of him, but the crazy yelling of them demons drowned everything. When I thought it was safe, I dragged along toward the doctor's cabin, but I'd only got a move on me when back come them murdering pirates.

"I could smell the burning torch and again I was afraid they'd touch me up with it, and I knew I couldn't play dead against that. I ain't ashamed to say I tried a bit of a prayer that I might live for my little girl—but I didn't know what I was in for then.

"They didn't burn me, but the light

caught the flash of a ring on my little finger, I guess, for in an instant, they was fighting like mad to see who could get it, clawing and gouging at my hand like fighting cats. It fitted pretty tight and their long nails dug and tore into me, making it harder to get off. I was prepared for what came. I knew they would never leave the ring behind and it wouldn't come off. I steeled every fibre to meet the sharp pain of the knife. But the hurt wasn't much. Maybe I was past feeling—doctor at the hospital afterward said something about me being under a shock—but there was a grating sound that racked every nerve in my body. I was glad when it was off, anyhow. The suspense was the killing part.

"Then there came the reaction. I think I went off my head, for I had a desperate desire to see that little finger again. I was terribly concerned lest they throw it overboard. I wondered in a silly sort of way, how it would seem to see your finger lying about on deck. But I came back from that foolishness in a jiffy. One of the dirty varmints pulled back my lips and ran his fingers along my teeth, seeking for gold fillings, I guess. It was right then that I nearly gave myself away. Pain wasn't nothing. I was so blasted mad, I near bit the hand off the filthy fiend. But he got tripped up just then and went sprawling across the deck, and I was saved.

"I don't know how often they passed and repassed after that, kicking me as they went by. I was rather numb and wasn't doing much thinking. After a long time it seemed very quiet. I thought I could hear the soft pump, pump of the engine, and the cool wet sound of water slapping against the sides of the boat. I couldn't hear a sound of the pirates, but the smell of them seemed to have stuck in my nose and I was afraid to move for a time. When I tried, I could have sworn my body had turned to stone. I could only scratch at the deck. My fingers messed into a puddle of wetness and then I remembered I'd been shot and I guess there was more of my blood around on the deck than in me. I thought I'd call out—then I wondered who could hear me if I did. I suddenly remembered that the engineer had not been with us and I wondered what the murdering devils had done to him. I felt awful sick for a moment; I could picture him lying in his blood, too. Then I heard footsteps; I could hear the click of heel nails and I knew they weren't the patter of Chinamen's shoes. But who could it be? The footsteps came nearer and nearer, slow and cautious. They stopped beside me. Somebody felt my face. 'Captain,' came a whisper. It was the engineer. I could only get a croak out of me to tell him I wasn't dead. Then I had a feeling of satisfaction and just went off.

"What happened after that don't count much. The doctor was dead. Luck had been with the engineer. In the fight he had broke through and had run to the engine room, taking refuge behind his boilers—and he was burned pretty bad. He got help though, at the first place we drifted by, and we were put in the hospital at Hong Kong. We both was laid up for a long time. It was three months before I could report for duty. I was given a new boat as soon as I was out, and I was feeling proud of it and all feverish to get up river again. I had seen every one of those pirates come aboard and I had a

memory for faces to beat the recording angel. A man has to have eyes for everything, doing business with heathens. I meant to get some of them, at least."

A simpering smile spread over the man's face for a moment, but it died as soon as it came. There was a change in his voice though, that remained—a cold, cynical note, that grated on the ear.

"I was all right till we stopped at Kwung Ly and the usual crowd of sampans swarmed around us. Then I had a sickening sensation. The smell of them turned my stomach, and I took a dram, but one didn't buck me up much, so I took another.

"As we went up the river, I felt better, but when we came to anchor again and hundreds of brown, stinking heathens clambered over the boat, I had the same sick feeling, so I took another drink. I'd never touched liquor and didn't know what I was up against. By the time we reached Wuchow, I was to the bad. Brown snakes crawled over me, and a hot oily smell suffocated me. Little brown glittering eyes peeked out at me from behind the furniture; they looked over my shoulder, they messed up in my food. I took more whiskey and the eyes began to come out of the air, like a swarm of bees, settling all over me, stinging me.

"The mate took charge of me and I soon got rid of the eyes. I was ashamed, and I thought I understood how to keep a hold on myself. So I did, until the next trip. But the very wind that blew off the villages smelled of them stinking pirates and I was soon as sick as a new cabin boy in his first storm. I took another drink.

"There ain't no use telling you the whole thing. I hit up the stuff until it got me for good. Then I saw the truth. Me that was captain of the Princess, as could whip any ten men, and was afraid of nothing, had lost my nerve. I ain't seen a sober day since, and always there was the eyes—seven thousand of them—I counted them. And I had prayed to live that night. I have prayed to die a thousand times since. Now I can't die. But I'm dead to the world. I'm dead to my little girl. Nobody knows I'm alive but Pap. He made things all right for my little girl."

The man's voice trailed off into plaintiveness, then suddenly burst into a loud challenge. "They say I'm never sober. I know that. But the eyes don't get me any more. They never come till I've had thirty drinks. I stop before I get to thirty now. And I kept my word. I stayed on the job until one way and another I had helped to execute fifty-two of them pirates. I said I'd see them damned and beheaded for everything they took. So I did. So I did."

With a lurch, the man rose, pressed his hand to his eyes as if to shut out some fearsome sight, and I saw that his little finger was missing.

Amid a profound hush, he walked unsteadily toward the door, pushed against the swinging panels and was gone out into the night.

Softly the door slapped behind the huge back like a friendly pat of sympathy. Stillness reigned. Then with one accord, each man raised high his glass, drained it, rose, and went out in silence.

The Roundabout Road

By EMMET F. HART

IF course, if you've anything more important on hand, why—but if not, we'll say the chronicle began in St. Louis. Meteorologically speaking, it was not a nice evening. A low-hanging canopy of fog overhung the city's streets; a moist, clinging, yellow mist, pungent with coal smoke and the varied odors and foulness of a metropolis in solution—a night of damp, indeterminate, muffled murmurings.

The clack of unseen horses' feet, the hollow drumming of wheels, fragments of talk, the clang of street-car gongs and the occasional grunt of an automobile horn. A night for footpads, rheumatism, collisions, collusions—a marshalling of wavering shadows in gloomy nooks, wherein well might lurk the reembodied spirits of Mystery, of Romance, of Adventure. Aha, say you; the tale takes a familiar shape! It is doubtless an old friend, albeit seedy from travelling a beaten path. Wait.

As R. Elliot McMacken, sometimes called Sport, rounded a corner some blocks removed from the downtown district, he slipped and fell sprawling. This statement, pertinent to both plot and setting, serves partly to introduce the action. We are shy only style and theme. There are stories—but, well, all right.

Fate is a jester. He, she, or it, as the case may be, moves in prankish ways, odd whimsies to perform. With his mouth mechanically set to the pronouncement of an anathema, Sport McMacken felt, beneath his fingers, the presence of some yielding object. The expletive he had been about to utter went unrecorded against him; he whistled softly instead, for he recognized by the shape and feel of it that a plump pocketbook lay there within the grasp of his fortunate hand. Rising, he peered quickly to right and left. No one was in sight. He crossed the street, pausing momentarily under the pallid illumination of a sputtering arc to inspect his find. A glance served—he caught a glimpse of banknotes, a considerable number of them, before slipping the pocketbook inside his shabby coat and plunging into the shadows.

Ten blocks onward, any fanciful hue and cry that he conceived to have resounded in his wake, growing fainter in the distance, the fugitive paused. A sign—"I. Levinsky, Clothing, Hats, Shoes"—looming semicircularly on an unwashed window, claimed the renegade's attention. A glimmer of light within, indicated that the establishment was yet open to the importunities of chance customers. Sport fingered the latch furtively, and then entered. It was I. Levinsky himself who came forward to attend him.

"Shoes," said Sport briefly.

Isadore Levinsky was not merely a salesman; he was also a hypnotist. The unsuspecting purchaser, having tendered a twenty-case-note from an obviously well-filled purse in payment for the

shoes, at once became prospective manna from the mist. Hence it was a metamorphosed Sport that issued forth from I. Levinsky's something like an hour subsequently. In natty serge suit, near-panama, ox-blood oxfords—to say naught of mercerized underwear, silkoid hose, silkaline shirt, silkette four-in-hand, glass pearl stick pin, oroide cuff-links—in fact, to all appearances, a citizen of distinction. Seventy-six dollars had the outfitting cost him—seventy-six dollars in cash. In the quasi-gloom of his little railed-off office, Isadore Levinsky massaged his hands. Seventy-six dollars' sale, and he had been about to lock up for the night when it happened. Think of it!

While in the temporary privacy of Levinsky's dressing room, McMacken had taken a hasty inventory of his capital. The pocketbook had contained originally four hundred and ten dollars in currency—and but little else; there were three stamps of the two-cent denomination, and a scrap of paper on which were written a few figures; and stencilled on the inner lining in gold letters was a name—probably that of the owner—Melrose Jordan. In view of the present possessor's manifest disregard for any prior rights in the premises, this name however, seemed of negligible importance.

Outside, the fog was being precipitated in a fine mist that threatened to become a steady drizzle. Our adventurer stood under an awning, for the moment undecided. A cab drawn by lagging steeds swerved in toward the curb, slowed down and stopped. "Kerridge? Anywhere ye wanta go?" came ingratiatingly from the blurred figure on the box.

Upon small pivots do large hinges revolve. R. Elliot McMacken hadn't thought of it before, but the idea suggested was not without its merits. A carriage suggested a railway station; at the railway station were trains bound—east, north, west, south. To a man with money, the field was wide, wide. Sport entered the vehicle.

"Union Depot, Jack," he directed succinctly.

A droning litany, that fell upon his ears as he passed through the general waiting-room, determined his further movements. "N-n-ng 'ra-in-n-go-in-ng nor-th! Nang-um-m-m! Br-r-r-ng! N-ng-cago! N-points b-yond-d! On-n tra-ack ten-n!" was its import. He stood in line, and in his turn passed a bill through the barred window, duly receiving therefor, a ticket to Chicago.

Seated later in the smoking compartment of the train which bore him forward through the velvety darkness, lulled by the rhythmic *chanson* of whirring wheels on rail joints beneath him, our traveller observed disinterestedly, a trio of men who sat, one on the seat beside him, and the other two on the divan opposite. All were of the genial, clean-shaven, sophisticated, American travelling-salesmen type. The conversation became general, presently including Sport in its mazes, and soon he found himself acquainted and accepted at his face value. Identities were established. The man next to him was named Ewing, and acknowledged himself as associated with one of the three notable products for which Kentucky has achieved a considerable noteworthiness—the other two being fine horses and beautiful women. Incidentally, Ewing carried a flask of his ware, which same

was duly introduced in evidence at an early stage of the proceedings.

Next to Ewing sat Thomas J. Atcliff, asphalt salesman, Chicago, and the third was George W. Crosby, St. Louis, hardware.

McMacken, in his turn, vouchsafed certain vague information as concerned himself—hinting at mining interests in the West, but with becoming modesty. Some one among the others—it may have been Crosby—later proposed an hour's diversion at the ancient and reputable gentleman's pastime of draw poker—a suggestion which was received with loud acclaim by all of those present. The wight of the whisk broom having been properly importuned, provided a lapboard, and Ewing, as it happened, furnished the cards and other accessories needed, from his travelling bag.

Atcliff dealt. The cards ran shy to the point of reticence. All contributed the usual counter, and Crosby shuffled the cards for another round. It was then Sport's privilege to speak up; he shook his head. Ewing, however, made shift to breach the citadel with a blue disc. Atcliff and Sport each invested half a dollar, and drew one and two cards respectively. Ewing shaved his hand to the bone.

"Up to you," he remarked briefly.

Atcliff tapped the table. Sport advanced a red chip. Ewing "saw" the bet, and raised a blue. Atcliff sighed, and—came in with a red and two blues. Sport murmured: "Beats me," and tossed his cards on the pack.

"Money accrues from divers sources," quoth Ewing, augmenting the mound by two more blues. Atcliff sighed, and boosted the bet yet again.

"Sight me," said Ewing. The other displayed the seven, nine, ten, queen and ace of hearts. Ewing threw down three kings with an air of sublime disgust.

Sport dealt.

"I'll rift this one for a red bean," Ewing announced. Atcliffe stayed, Crosby also. Sport kept out. After the draw, the bet went round thrice. Crosby called, showing two small pairs. Ewing exhibited three nines. Atcliff absorbed the stakes with a trey full.

"Bull luck," commented Ewing. "Let Pa deal 'em once."

Sport started the hostilities this time. Ewing boosted the bet before the draw. Atcliff likewise saw fit to venture a raise. Even Crosby made it a blue chip better.

"Here's where we clean up," chuckled Ewing. "Why not remove the restrictions? I feel like an aeroplane myself."

"Right," said Atcliff. Crosby nodded. Sport delved with thumb and finger in his inner pocket, and dropped a bill on the central mound.

"My dear sir!" said Ewing. "Have you no sense of humor? I was only fooling. A ten-case note? My stars—a twenty! Pardon me, I'm out."

Crosby choked on the smoke of his cigar and blinked at the plunger meditatively. "Well, I wear woolen hose," he remarked finally, adding two fives and a ten to the pot. Atcliff was numbered among the fallen.

"Two cards," said Crosby.

"One," said Sport. "Start the bet with a tenner."

"Ten better," returned the other unemotionally.

"Make it ten better."

"Raise you twenty."

Sport again delved in his pocket.

"Fifty better," he said pleasantly.

"Um," mused Crosby. "Fifty'll about leave me carfare. Well, here goes!"

"Tough luck," grinned his opponent, displaying four kings. Crosby sadly threw down three aces with a pair of tens.

Fresh cigars were lighted. Ewing brought out a fat purse and hitched himself forward in his place. Crosby discovered a further supply of money somewhere on his person, and kept on. Atcliff seemed well supplied with funds. The game progressed.

It was, mayhap, an hour later, that Atcliff opened a pot with a dollar bet. Ewing, who had been consistently losing, at last claimed poverty's prerogative, and isolated a certain portion of the stakes. Crosby stood one raise before the draw and dropped out.

Atcliff and Sport continued to boost each other mercilessly. On the draw, the former drew two cards, the latter one. Ewing, having failed to help a luckless pair of eights, yelped an execration and became a spectator.

"Bet a hundred," grunted Atcliff.

"Raise you a hundred," said Sport without looking at his cards.

Atcliff deliberated. "Hundred more," he said.

Sport smiled genially. "Two hundred better," he announced pleasantly.

Atcliff disinterred the last remaining bill from his wallet—a fifty. "I seem to be touching bottom," he commented; "fifty's my pile."

Ewing craned his neck to get a glimpse of Sport's hand. A thing, Mr. Ewing, not generally regarded as good form in polite society.

"Come in for what you have," said Sport cheerfully. "Small sums thankfully received, and large ones in proportion."

"Thanks awfully," decided Atcliff. "My feet seem to be tolerably wet as it is. I think I'll save this half century for the taxi man. Good night!"

Sport jumbled his cards in the scrap heap, and raked in the clutter of money. The game was over. The assembled company presently dispersed to their several sections, all except Crosby, who was getting off at Peoria.

"What did that fellow hold?" Atcliff queried of Ewing, as they passed along the aisle together. "I'm a little curious to know. I quit with four queens."

"My poor dear sir," said Ewing. "Alackaday! He had a diamond flush—but for one thing. The last diamond he drew was a spade."

At ten o'clock the following morning, R. Elliot McMacken, newly shaved, bathed, and breakfasted, with nine hundred dollars in his pocket, sauntered along Michigan Avenue. The lake breeze caressed his temples, and whispered alluring messages from the cool woods beyond the blue horizon, but his ears were not attuned to the idle importunities of chance wandering zephyrs.

He bought a paper, and momentarily pausing at a corner to glance at its headlines, lingered to read the market quotations. Then, apparently moved by some definite purpose, he propounded a question to the traffic officer; and having received a prompt and courteous reply, nodded, smiled, offered his informant a gilt-banded cigar, and tripped airily on his way.

A little later, our pensive adventurer sat nonchalantly in a leather chair in an

office on the fourth floor back, of a building where the soft invitation of the lake breeze was somewhat lost in the shuffle. A short-necked man in his shirt sleeves, whose chief aim in life seemed to be the grim mastication of an unlighted cigar, sat at a cluttered desk. A demure young woman at a diminutive table by the far wall was achieving a species of rhythm in the tick-tack-tack of typewriter keys. The man at the desk blocked a telephone mouthpiece with a pudgy hand.

"July pork eighteen sixty-two and a half," he remarked over his shoulder to Sport.

"Buy five hundred," returned that person yawning.

The man repeated this behest in as many words to somebody on the line.

"How's wheat?" asked Sport.

"Ninety, five-eights."

"Buy five thousand."

An hour, let us say, elapsed, during which interval McMacken, lounging by a window, silently beguiled himself by staking imaginary odds on the outcome of a sparrow battle in progress on a nearby roof. At eleven o'clock he turned expectantly to the man at the desk.

"Pork, nineteen eighty-five; wheat, ninety-two, seven eights," said that person.

"Sell," directed Sport curtly.

At noon—having edged in opportunely on the eve of a five point jump in U. S. Electric—Sport unloaded, settled up, shook hands, and caught a car. His cash capital now amounted to some twenty-four hundred dollars. While lunching at a modest restaurant he made the acquaintance of a congenial stranger who gave the name of Smith as his cognominal embellishment. This person mentioned something about automobile races at Indianapolis. By catching the 12.50 interurban car, the two were able to reach the Indiana capital the same evening.

Smith was a racing enthusiast. To this fact might be attributed the passing circumstance that, on the following day, at two-thirty post meridian, to be exact, Sport idly ventured a paltry hundred dollars to win on Linda Lee, quoted at 40 to 1 to lose. (They were in a quiet room on the seventh floor of a downtown office building at that time.) Linda Lee won by a nose. Compute the result yourself.

At three o'clock Sport bade Smith adieu and boarded the Hoosier Limited for Louisville. On the way he met a man wearing a polka-dotted waistcoat, who confided, after some hours' acquaintance, that he was a big league scout professionally engaged in reconnoitering the minors for future pennant-winners. Jones was the name.

Arrived at the City of Colonels at a not unseemly hour, the two supped, juleped, and Jones confided further, that he knew a place where one might pass a pleasant hour dabbling one's feet in the fountain of chance without getting needlessly bedraggled. Sport said that he didn't mind.

Somewhere near midnight, a man behind a table in a luxuriously appointed apartment, several floors up and a few blocks around the corner, noted the ultimate resting-place of a small sphere which had traversed the inner surface of a sort of concave bowl just previously, and tendered Sport some three thousand dollars in bills, as a generous reward for his cleverness in prognostication.

Louisville seemed, if anything, dull, the next morning. It is a flat, rather uninteresting town, and smells of tobacco. However, the flyer (?) for Memphis leaves, as a rule, at 10.10 in the forenoon. Sport unostentatiously stepped aboard at 10.09.

At the Brunhilde, overlooking the rejuvenated river-front in Memphis, a short-sighted desk-clerk grinned somewhat significantly at our traveller's near-panama. The grinne at once sough. the proprietor of the hostelry.

"Set a price on this dump," he snapped, in the tone of one who has five minutes to spare, no more.

"Furniture, lease, good-will—nine thousand bucks," said Boniface, after four minutes' self-communion.

"You've sold it," said Sport. "Fix up the papers."

As the new proprietor, he accepted the thoughtless clerk's apology, stopped over for dinner, and later sold out for ten thousand dollars cash to a man named Skinner, with a margin of nearly ten minutes to spare in order to catch the outgoing train for Kansas City. The journey being of somewhat longer duration, he had an opportunity to secure a little revivifying sleep.

In Kansas City he paused to purchase a cigar before climbing the hill, tendering a one-dollar note, and receiving nine dollars and seventy-five cents in change. Uptown he bought a nickeloid watch from a corner spellbinder, and presently was knocked down by a speeding motorist—who paid him $500 for a bruised forearm, and a little dusting; yet later on, he had his pocket picked of his watch in the crowd, attending a bargain sale of granite-ware dishpans at a 5-and-10-cent store. Willing spectators, however, promptly captured the pickpocket, and restored to him an elegant gold watch, together with a roll of currency amounting to $250. He refused to prosecute the offender and at nine P. M. caught the Comet for Omaha.

In Omaha one hears of the Big Storm, and sees—but this isn't really a sight-seeing story. Having breakfasted, and communed with the barber, our wayfarer dilly-dallied on a bench in a little park, amusing himself betimes, by feeding popcorn to the Chinese chickens—and by taking off a trial balance of his assets and liabilities with a stub of pencil on the margin of a Times-Graphic. These calculations showed that he possessed in negotiable collateral the sum of $11,011.06, the six cents of which was in stamps.

And then—a full page advertisement in the paper claimed his attention.

UNEXAMPLED INVESTMENT!

For ten days only the unparalleled opportunity is afforded the public to purchase at par, three thousand shares, at $50 each, in

THE CENTRAL BRAZIL RUBBER PLANTATION SYNDICATE, LIMITED

Home Office, Jefferson Block, St. Louis, U. S. A.

Cable Address, Cebrarucco

The announcement was followed by more extended and attractively explicit paragraphs explaining the rare chance of fortune presented to the conservative invester, the unheard-of, almost unbelievable profits already being garnered by the company, together with a detailed statement of the capitalization, strength, backing, etc., of the undertaking, its plans, its splendid promises, its absolute integrity.

"Safe, Certain, Sixteen Per-Cent. on

the Investment!" was the final compelling paragraph. Sport read the whole page over twice, and the euphony of that final sentence stirred his pulses strangely. "Safe, Certain, and Sixteen Per-Cent!" It sounded more and more alluring. He feared that it was already too late—that his opportunity had only knocked at the eleventh hour. He got into immediate action, hying him in person to the nearest telegraph office, hastily.

"Want two hundred shares," he wired. "Advise if available."

The reply came with reasonable celerity. "Original block sold out. Have option 200 shares till to-morrow at 55. If O. K. wire purchase price, Windward National Bank, our order quick."

Galvanized into immediate action, our embryo chevalier d'investment hurriedly took advantage of this last chance to get in on the ground floor. After which he took time to congratulate himself. Beyond all possibility of a reasonable doubt, the stock would touch 65, or even higher, within a week. He felt it by some clairvoyant instinct.

Meanwhile, Omaha seemed a humdrum and uninteresting place, withal. He thought it not unadvisable to make a little flying dash down to the home office. So he bought a ticket and had a lower reserved.

Saturday, in the afternoon, then, R. Elliott McMacken, flecked with the dust of several leagues of travelling, descended from the train under the station sheds at St. Louis, having in his pocket a single silver dollar yet unnegotiated. And having descended, he entered a waiting hack or cabriolet, mentioning to the patient driver certain directions concerning the Jefferson Block.

A short drive brought him thither. The fare was an even dollar.

Sport stood in somewhat dubious contemplation of a squat, squalid, smoke-discolored edifice, whose three stories were tenanted by a cosmopolitan array of enterprises, ranging from second-hand goods to rooms for light housekeeping. There being no elevator, he climbed two flights of rickety stairs before finding that which he sought.

A frosted glass door bore the insignia: "Central Brazil Rubber Company—Office." The visitor rapped, listened, turned the knob. The door was not locked. He opened it and gazed into the room.

There was a desk, table, chairs—all empty. Discarded pamphlets, literature of an advertising nature, law strewn upon the floor. He stepped to the abandoned desk, and with an air of stolid, half-bored curiosity, picked up and examined a printed business card which lay thereon. "The Central Brazil Rubber Plantation Syndicate Limited," he read, and, in the lower left hand corner, in smaller type, the words:

"Melrose Jordan, President."

The $5,000.00 BLACK CAT Prize Short Story Contest Conditions will be announced in the January number.

The Awakening of Eof Tanner

By ANNIE DYER NUNN

EOF TANNER drove up to the front gate, climbed down from his lofty seat on the wagon and hitched his thin, morbid-looking team to a careening fence post. Then, in the leisurely way that characterized all his movements, he began unloading a motley collection of tools, which gave evidence of being precariously near the junk-pile stage. Apparently he was deeply absorbed in his work, at least he did not so much as glance up from it when there burst upon the air a loud voice singing a rollicking song, the main couplet of which, to judge from the number of times it was repeated, was:

"There's a beef in the herd, and
the boss says kill it,
Then we'll all eat meat out o'
the same big skillet."

These edifying words came from the throat of Bill Everett, an individual as unkempt as Eof Tanner, who was coming jauntily up the street. As he rounded the corner, he stopped singing.

"Hello, Eof," said he, "pow'ful hot this evenin'."

"Good evening'," Eof grumbled.

"Heard you'uz going to dig a well for Jep Carter."

Eof grunted noncommittally.

"Pretty blamed hard up for a job, ain't you? Now, I promised to help you from now on, but I wuzn't countin' on us a-workin' for that old crook. Beat me out'n a month's wages, onct."

Tanner threw a heavy wrench to the ground, then turned and looked at the other sourly.

"Who's hirin' you, me or him?" he demanded in the gutteral tones that come from sparingly used vocal chords.

"You, o' course. But s'posen Carter don't pay you for the well we dig; where do I come in at?"

"Carter'll pay me, all right."

"If we don't strike water on that there land—and 'tain't recorded that we will; you know all them dry holes 'round there—if we don't, I say, we'll never git a cent for the work. I got no time to throw away, money neither."

"I tell you I'm good for this money," snarled Eof.

Bill glanced dubiously at Eof, a tall, stooped figure in ragged overalls, then at the emaciated team.

"You can't pay me," he snorted, "if Jep don't pay you."

"He'll pay me, all right," the other persisted doggedly.

"You mark my words, we'll git stung. That old boy, he's tricky, he is. Jest when you think he's your best friend, he quits you like a steer in the road."

By this time they were seated on the rickety bench, in front of the gate. Tanner was filling his blackened pipe, and Bill was cramming his mouth with tobacco. Both turned at the sound of a timid voice behind them. A slim, brown-eyed girl, about sixteen years old, came and stood at Eof's elbow.

"Pa, give me fifteen cents. Ma said so."

"What for?" her father demanded roughly.

"Can o' corn for supper. I'm going after it."

Eof fished into his pocket and brought out three dirty nickels.

Julia Tanner took the money and started down the road.

"Yep. He don't mind skinning nobody. That's the way he done Jim Tillman. Tillman he 'uz one of these trustin' kind. He gets Jep to hold down a section he 'uz homesteading out, and what does Jep do? He ups and steals it."

But apparently Eof was not listening. With lowering brow and angry eyes, he was watching a bit of byplay. A short distance from where the men sat, Julia had caught up with a good-looking, well-dressed girl about her own age, who was passing. She spoke shyly. The girl swept her with a cold stare that took in her faded cap, equally faded dress and rusty, ill-shaped shoes. Then, without a word, she went on. As Julia dropped behind in evident embarrassment, the two were overtaken by a smart automobile. In it were several young girls. One of them was driving. With loud honking the car came to a stop.

"Get in here, Sally Rogers," the driver called. "We are going to Grace's to help her fix up for the party. We need you, too."

Laughing gaily, Sally scrambled in among her chattering friends. The car shot ahead, and Julia, a forlorn little figure, was left staring wistfully after it. Then, blinking the tears from her eyes, she started dejectedly toward town.

"Yep," drawled Bill, resuming the conversation, "Carter he got rich off that section o' land. I heard afterwards that losing that land busted Jim Tillman."

But Eof, with savagely gleaming eyes, sat staring at the road where the girls had been.

"Who 'uz that 'un drivin'?" he demanded with an oath.

"Her? Why that's Jep Carter's. Swell kid, ain't she?"

Bill leaned back in order to replace a piece of tobacco in his pocket.

"As I 'uz sayin'," he continued, "Jep he——"

"Aw, shut up! Everybody knows what he done," snarled Eof, kicking vindictively at a tin can, as he got to his feet. "I didn't hire you to talk about Jep Carter from mornin' till night. Guess the old hound works, at least, which is more than I——"

"Say, what's eatin' on you, anyhow?" demanded Bill.

But Tanner was halfway down the path, which, hedged in by wild millet and sickly hollyhocks, led a crooked way to the house.

Bill stood staring after him with a puzzled look.

"Guess—yes, I guess," he muttered as he turned toward town, "that he sees the difference 'twixt Carter's kid and his'n. That's what's the matter."

Eof strode into his ramshackle dwelling and stormed through the "front room" and on into the kitchen.

Mrs. Tanner, a slight, dreary-looking woman, who sat darning an old sock, glanced up listlessly, when Eof banged his fist down upon the rickety table and thundered:

"I want you to go to town this very day an' buy Julie a silk dress. Silk, d'ye hear? Don't want no other kind."

"What on earth's come over you?" she demanded in a tired voice.

Eof glared at her. "You git that dress, I say. Julie's got to have some decent clo'es."

"How we goin' to buy any silk dress? Huh? Eof Tanner, you're crazy."

"We can," he returned, subsiding a bit. "Greely'll charge it."

Mrs. Tanner laughed shrilly.

"I see myself tryin' to git Greely to charge a silk dress. He knows you can't pay for a calico, much less a silk 'un."

Eof seated himself on the woodbox and began slowly to dust the ashes from his pipe.

"He'll charge it, I think——" he began, his bluster subsiding.

"Stop puttin' them ashes on the floor. I jest swept," snapped his wife.

He reached out and deposited what remained in the stove.

"He knows I'm goin' to start drillin' for Carter."

Mrs. Tanner's lips set in a thin, straight line.

"You ain't goin' to start that well until the very last minute, and you know it!" she said scornfully.

At that moment Julia entered the house, bearing her late purchase. There were tear stains on her cheeks that enhanced the wistfulness of her big eyes. She stood irresolute, glancing first at one, then the other of her parents.

"I tell you I'm goin' to start that well in the morning," said Eof. "An' I'm goin' to see that this yer kid is dressed up as good as anybody's kid."

Julia dropped her can of corn. A look of incredulous joy filled her eyes.

"I don't b'lieve you'll do any sich thing," remarked the disillusioned Mrs. Tanner.

"Oh, Ma, maybe he means it," cried Julia, a new hope in her tone.

Tanner turned toward the girl.

"You b'lieve me, don't you, Julie?" He spoke gently, in a tone poor Julia seldom had heard. "Me an' you'll git that there dress, if she won't."

"'Course we will. Le's go right now, Pa."

They left the house. Mrs. Tanner looked after them with puzzled eyes.

"I wonder if he will git that there dress," she said aloud. "I can't b'lieve him—still it does look kinder——" her words trailed off into silence, as she again took up her darning.

The next morning Eof got up at four o'clock which was exactly four hours ahead of the usual time. He went across the street, yanked Bill Everett out of bed, then came home and cooked breakfast for the two of them. The amazed Bill took no pains to conceal his resentment over having been deprived of his morning's peaceful slumber. His remarks regarding Eof's business-like preparations for the day's work, were caustic and profuse. But Eof, his lips set in a line of determination, his shoulders straightened from their habitual droop, ignored alike his remarks and look of astonishment. He gave the old grays an extra portion of feed, hitched them to the wagon carrying his drilling equipment, and set forth, accompanied by the still sarcastic Bill Everett.

An hour later they pulled up at the Carter ranch. Carter himself met them at the gate.

"So it's you, Eof," he sneered. "Didn't expect you inside a month."

"I come, jest the same," returned Eof shortly.

"Ready to start drillin'?"

"When you plank down a hundred in advance, not before."

Carter stared in evident surprise.

"Looky here, Tanner, I wasn't figgering on nothing like that."

"You wuzn't? Well I wuz."

"I ain't throwing money round as promiscuous as you might think."

"You ain't like the feller that started you up in business, then, huh?"

Carter's crafty blue eyes shot fire.

"Say, you don't want to start nothin' like that," he warned.

Here Bill Everett, always a peace-loving soul, put in apprehensively: "Aw come, Eof, we've got to git to work."

"If you want that there drillin' done, Carter, write me a check. If not, all right."

The look of astonishment that had first crossed Carter's face deepened.

"What's got into this man, anyhow?" he mumbled, as he reluctantly drew out his check book.

Tanner went at the Carter well like the professional that he was. He worked with a precision and steadiness of which no one had dreamed him capable. Scarcely a word during the long days did he speak to Bill Everett, except to order him about. Bill sweated and swore at the man's astonishing energy. Bill's chief reason for hiring himself to Tanner had been to get an easy job. Jep Carter made frequent visits to the scene of action, watching with keenest interest the progress of the well. Once, he brought Lucy, his daughter. She stared at the drillers in a characteristically superior way, without so much as a nod in their direction, watched the machinery a few minutes, asked some inconsequential questions of her father, and departed.

After that, Tanner's grouchiness increased to such an extent that Bill took to watching him out of the corner of one eye and even ceased to mumble, except under his breath, over the long hours and the heat. Bill was not notorious for his bravery.

"Well, Eof," remarked Carter one morning, in a tremendously satisfied tone, as he strode pompously about the well machine, "you're doing a darn good job here. Had no idea it was in you to work like this. When we strike water, this land is as good as sold for thirty dollars an acre."

Bill looked at him maliciously. "You got it cheap enough," he commented.

"Only paid four for it," grinned Carter. "I don't pay much for anything. That's my style. Boys, if there's any best to a game, I jest naturally pick on it."

The mud-spattered Tanner emptied his "slush" bucket; then, without looking at his employer, spoke in his usual gruff tone.

"Ought'er had that there—what's-his-name?—Tillman here. Like as not he'd 'a' give it to you."

"Wish some kind, good feller like that would set me up in business. Say, Jep, where do them kind grow at?" inquired Bill.

"Maybe if you had sense enough to know a good thing when you see it," Carter returned, unabashed, "you'd be somebody, too. It's jest feeble-mindedness that knocks most people out o' success. That section I got hold of twenty years ago was a square enough deal. I was holding it for Tillman. He went home to look after his father who was sick. He put my wages in the bank in escrow. When he wanted the land back,

he sent me word to deed the land back to him and collect them wages. I jest set down and wrote him to keep them wages. Fair enough, wasn't it? He got the wages, I got the land. This land we are drillin' on now come cheap because I had a mortgage on it and closed the feller out. He——"

"Say," said Bill suddenly, "there's a bug under the chip, som'ers. Henson's no fool. He could have paid that mortgage. He had a reason for selling this land cheap."

"What do you mean?" demanded Carter, sobering instantly.

"I mean that there's no water here, if you ask me."

"Eof, you reckon———" Jep began apprehensively.

"Dunno," Eof grunted indifferently.

"How deep are we now?"

"'Bout two hundred and thirty feet."

"This well and the one I tried to get last year will cost me over five hundred dollars. If we don't have luck this time, I'm goin' to be a sick man," said Carter, with conviction.

"I dug four holes for Henson on his section that joins this. We never did strike water."

"Oh, yes, I know all that," returned Carter, with growing irritation, "but that don't mean that I'll not get it."

"No, but it shore looks like we 'uz headed for a dry hole," said Eof almost pleasantly.

"How deep did Henson go?"

"He went three hundred. Nobody ever went below that in this country. It's a safe bet that if you're goin' to strike the stream at all, it'll be 'round one eighty."

"Well, I'll go as deep as four hundred. As I said, if we strike water, this land is worth thirty dollars an acre—maybe more."

"But if you don't get water, you can't give the land away," was Bill's cheerful reminder.

Almost the only catastrophe that could wring the heart of Carter was a dollar catastrophe. He deplored the smallest loss as an appalling tragedy. In view of this, it is not surprising that the days that followed were tense ones for him. He spent nearly all his time with the drillers, waiting, hoping for signs of the coveted water. Even a casual observer would have known that Carter was suffering, as the apparently fruitless work went on. Every foot that was drilled meant sixty-five cents out of his pocket.

"We are down four hundred feet now, Jep," said Eof, one afternoon, to Carter, who had just arrived at the drill. "Want to go any farther?"

"No," bawled Carter, furiously. "Shut her down. Not another foot will I pay for."

He seated himself on a pile of old timbers, the picture of despairing rage.

"Five hundred dollars gone," he kept saying over and over.

Eof made no comment, but his sullen black eyes held a look of unalloyed pleasure.

"Looks like a driller of your experience would have knowed better than to go this deep. Looks like——"

"Cut it out," snarled Eof. "I told you I didn't have no faith in this yer well."

Carter buried his face in his hands.

"Five hundred dollars gone," he repeated mournfully.

Bill sniggered. Eof began gathering up his tools.

"What you need here is a feller like

what's-his-name, to give you another start," he sneered.

Carter ignored his thrust.

"Eof," he said, "I got to get water on this land. I want you to dig me another well—that is, if you'll do it for half price."

Bill's hands went up in protest. "Don't be countin' on me to help Eof Tanner any more. Here's where I take one path and him t'other. What he needs is a human steam engine, one that'll——"

Carter glared at him so furiously that Bill fell silent.

"What you say, Eof? Will you do it?"

"Naw, I won't."

"All right, all right," Carter said angrily. "Maybe you'll be reasonable enough to guarantee me water, if I pay full price for another well."

"I won't do that, neither. For all you know there may not be a drop of water under your whole section."

"I'll tell you what I'll do." Carter's tone was now ingratiating. "I'll pay you for two wells, if you guarantee me water."

"No. Too many dry holes 'round here."

"Come now, that's the fairest proposition you ever heard of."

"It is, huh? Not the way I see it," growled Eof.

"Good Lordy, man, you might strike water the very next hole."

Eof's only response was a sneering laugh. His eyes were crafty.

Presently he seated himself on the timbers beside Carter, and, taking out his knife, began to whittle. He was silent for some minutes. Then he cleared his throat and, with a sly sidewise glance at his employer, spoke slowly:

"Say, Jep, I'm goin' to be honest with you. If I was you, I wouldn't waste no more money on this yer land. It's worth a few dollars like it is. I'd jest sell it for what I could git and buy more—some that you know has water."

Carter snorted wrathfully.

"What? Me sell a thirty-dollar piece of land for two or three?"

"You are crazy, Jep. This land is as good as condemned, and you know it."

Carter groaned.

"Eof, ain't there no kind of a reasonable proposition you can make me?"

Eof threw away the piece of stick he had been whittling on and fished about for another. His manner was a bit nervous.

"I'll guarantee you water," he said slowly and with a great show of indifference, "for half of this land."

Carter sprang to his feet swearing furiously.

"No, I'll not be skinned in any sich a manner," he bawled.

Eof waved a deprecating hand.

"Set down, set down," he said calmly. "Jest think this thing over. Me an' you both know that this is a shaky business for me. But you are bound to profit anyway you fix it. If I get a well here, you'll have three hundred and twenty acres of valuable land; if I don't, there's no harm done."

Carter hesitated, then got out his note book and began to figure earnestly. Eof watched him out of the corner of one eye. When Carter glanced up at him after a few minutes, his face wore the dead sure look of the professional trader.

"Guess I jest as well take you up on that proposition. It's a-puttin' you in line to make an awful haul at my ex-

pense, but I don't see as I can do any better."

They fell to planning the terms of the contract. That finished, they got into Carter's automobile and drove to town. There, without delay, the papers were legally drawn up. Eof's amusement over Carter's haste to have the thing down in black and white was hardly concealed.

When the business was arranged to the satisfaction of both, they returned to Carter's land, to hunt a location for Tanner's further activities. As they were about to pass the drill, Tanner insisted that they get out and "sorter look things over."

Carter made no protest.

A puzzled look crept into his eyes when he saw Tanner crank up his engine and start the slush bucket once more on its downward way. When presently the bucket was drawn up, and a stream of clear water flowed from it, his face turned the color of ashes, his stark lips moved, but they emitted no sound.

"'Pears like I'd made a good deal," remarked Eof. "Same sorter deal you made with what's-his-name back in—"

"You knew water'd been struck!" shouted Carter.

"Maybe so," admitted Tanner.

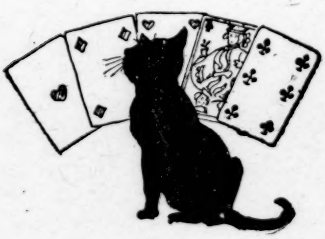
"But you told me—"

"I told you we 'uz down to four hundred," cut in Eof, "but I didn't say we hadn't struck water. At that, it isn't a deal I'd give most men, but when I remember how you got that section from Jim Tillman—"

Carter's jaw sagged. He looked at Eof as if suddenly seeing him for the first time.

"Who the devil are you, anyway?" he demanded.

"Me? Why, I'm that there Jim Tillman."



No Salvage

By CAMPBELL MacCULLOCH

CAPTAIN Ben Farish walked briskly into the luxurious private office of the youthful president of the Blue Ball Line, slapped his old blue cap upon the polished mahogany desk, dragged up one of the massive chairs, and sat down.

"Mornin', Jimmy," he called cheerily. "How's the nearly new and almost noble president?"

Young James Prescott Rothwell did not raise his eyes, but a pink tint of annoyance stole over his face as he bent over the letters he was signing.

"Good morning, Captain Farish," he replied evenly. "I'll be with you in a moment."

The older man, sixty-five, keen-eyed and as tough as an ash oar, started, puzzled.

"Captain Farish?" he repeated inquiringly. "What's the matter with 'Uncle Ben,' Jimmy?"

The young man did not reply, nor did he look up, but calmly continued inscribing his name just above the magic typewritten word, "President," at the bottom of each sheet. Finally he stuck the elaborate pen between his teeth, seized a blotter, and with great care absorbed the superfluous ink from each sheet. Captain Farish looked puzzled, but shrugged his shoulders and glanced with an admiring eye about the luxurious appointments of the room—at the handsome paintings upon the brown-burlapped walls, at the thick, soft rug that covered the parquet floor, at the massive furniture—and gradually a grin stole over his good-humored and weather-beaten features.

"Wonder how your old dad would have liked this," he murmured, half to himself. "Not much like the cabin of the old Laura, nor yet like the old place down on South Street. By hokey, when I think of that old place down there and the way it used to smell, I wonder how your old man stood it, Jim. Did you know I got the shippin' clerk to put the captain's old desk—the one with the three legs and the piece of board nailed on where the other ought to have been—away for me? Thought maybe you'd like to have it up at the house." He paused, but the younger man with set features did not reply, and the captain rambled on.

"I mind well how that old desk come to get the leg knocked off it. There was a skipper by the name o' Hansen, a big whale of a man, that comes in there one day an' told your dad that th' Laura had fouled him in the channel and carried away a quarter boat from his schooner, and he wanted forty dollars then and there, and no waitin'. When the old man told him to go to blazes, the Swede slapped his face, and your dad proceeded to clean house with the fellow. The first blow that was struck caught that Swede under the jaw and knocked him fifteen feet. He hit the desk and bein' a big man, cracked the leg off as clean as if you'd sawed it."

Captain Farish laughed silently with

great enjoyment, and the young man pushed the letters away from him, looked up quickly, and leaned back in his great swing chair.

"Captain Farish," he said slowly, "I sent for you to tell you that the Blue Ball Line will not require your services after the present down-trip. Your salary will continue until the end of the year, however. When you reach Martinez you will turn the Acantha over to Captain Bennington, who will be awaiting you there. I have no doubt you will be glad of the rest after your long years of service."

For some moments the old man stared at young Mr. Rothwell as if unable to believe his senses, but seeing no sign of humor on that coldly precise face before him, he turned slowly red beneath the years of weather stain.

"Do you mean that, Jimmy?" he said slowly and with some difficulty. "You're goin' to give Pete Bennington my ship? Why, he's only a kid. They just gave him his master's ticket last year!"

President Rothwell fixed his visitor with hard eyes.

"I mean it, of course," he said crisply. "I'm not in the habit of talking idly. You're getting old, Captain," he went on a bit more gently, "and I feel we need younger blood in the line. We find there's a number of older men who are not efficient, and it is my desire to weed them out gradually, replacing them with men who are of fewer years. It is the policy of the line hereafter that no man over forty-five shall be in a position of trust." He paused again and glanced out of the window with a certain superciliousness.

"Too much caution has a bad effect upon dividends, Captain. We'll announce that you wish to retire and have handed in your resignation."

The old man sprang up and swept his cap from the desk. Then he leaned forward with blazing eyes.

"Because that dago liner from the Mediterranean ripped our midship plates and laid the old boat up two trips last month?" he demanded suddenly.

The younger man pursed his lips until they formed a thin line, and wrinkled his brows, but he made no answer.

"Answer me, Jimmy Rothwell!" exclaimed the old captain, with a smash of his hard fist upon the desk.

"We feel that occasionally a commander might act with more decision than has sometimes been shown," the new president began, when the irate old man interrupted him with a savage gesture. In an instant he was standing over the immaculate young gentleman whose face had turned pale.

"You do feel that, eh?" the captain exploded. "Jimmy, I come pretty near bringin' you up, after your ma died gettin' you into this here world. That was on the old Laura, and your dad wouldn't look at you for two year or more. If it hadn't been that I nursed you, you'd have starved for the weak little brat you was." He paused, and then his voice took a lower tone.

"You know me. You know I was mate with Captain Bill on th' first voyage he made when he'd saved enough to buy the old schooner, and I was mate with him when he brought your mother aboard for the first time, and we went off down among the islands. I was standin' outside the cabin when you yelped for the first time, an' I never left your old dad until he laid the Laura up, when he started the Blue Ball, an' gave me my

first ship. That was twenty odd years ago, Mr. James Prescott Rothwell, and I never calculated to leave his boy, that is, so long as that boy stayed human," he finished abruptedly with a steely note in his rough voice.

James Rothwell half started up from his chair.

"I will not permit—" he began stridently, but the old man cut him short with a roar.

"Shut up!" he cried. "You won't permit! You, that I've whaled across my knee more times than I can remember." He laughed hoarsely. "You won't permit, eh?" He leaned down until his keen old eyes looked into the wavering ones of the younger man. "You think I might have acted with more decision, do you? What you mean is that I had the right of way, an' that if either ship was goin' to get rammed you'd want to be d——— sure it wasn't yours, eh? And you know that there was six hundred crazy Italians aboard that liner, an' if I'd hit her 'stead of lettin' her hit me th' way I did there'd have been another steel coffin lyin' on the bottom in less than ten minutes! That was the work you'd want a younger man for, is it? Son, I'm glad the old captain's gone so he won't know what a white-livered skunk he left behind him. If he'd ever heard you tell any man what you've told me he'd take a rope's end an' teach you some sea manners that somehow has sloughed off while you've been livin' ashore, an' I'm not at all sure that he wouldn't want me to do it for him."

The president of the Blue Ball Line glanced up in quick fright, for across the gap of years came the sudden memory of the heavy, tarry hand that had inculcated morals and discipline on the old schooner. He quickly and surreptitiously jabbed the push button that was set in the edge of the shining desk. The old man saw it and laughed contemptuously.

"Don't be afraid—now," he said, turning away and shouldering the immaculate secretary out of his way as he went. At the door he paused and looked back.

"Bennington can have her, an' act with the kind of decision you an' your breed want!" he snapped savagely, and whipped the door to after him with a jar that shook the steel-framed building. As he neared the front door, Nielson, the traffic manager of the line, called to him.

"Just a moment, Captain!" he cried, and the old fellow turned back. "Mr. Rothwell's going down with you to-night. But I suppose he told you. He's going down to get Mrs. R. and the boy. They'll have A3 on the promenade deck, just aft of your cabin. Thought I'd let you know so you could look after them. The lady won't travel with any other skipper, you know."

He laughed genially, and Captain Farish clenched his hands in the emotion that possessed him. For a moment he stood fighting down his feelings.

"She'll have to after this," he said with an effort. "I'm through after this trip, Nielson. Bennington brings the Acantha back." Before the manager could frame a reply he was gone.

He ran up the gang plank to his ship like a boy and went at once to his cabin. The steward came running in answer to his ring.

"Ask Mr. Groome to step here," he said.

When the first officer entered, Captain Farish was pulling off his coat.

"Sit down, Tom," he said shortly. "You'll be interested to hear that I'm through after this trip. I'm telling you because they're givin' the old tub to Pete Bennington, who's just about as fit to run her as he is a grindstone. He's waitin' down at Martinez for her now. She ought to go to Harry Murdock, on the Aldibran, and that would give you the Azalia, but the young fool gets her."

The other stared in amazement.

"But why, Skipper?" he asked wide-eyed, and the old man whirled on him with cruel agony in his eyes.

"Because I didn't send that infernal Pierto Marini to Davy Jones when she scraped us off the Cape, I suppose," he snapped. "At least that's what young Jimmy hinted at. They want a younger man, who might act with more decision, he says." He sat down on a cushioned locker and there was pain in his weather beaten face.

"It's pretty tough, Tommy," he went on with a catch in his voice. "And to get it passed to you like that. An' by—him! Why, I was nurse to that boy, Tom. I brought him up, an' taught him his letters aboard the Laura. I made him the first pair of pants he ever owned out of an old lug-sail, an' he used to crawl all over me an' call me 'Uncle Ben.' Why, he never called me anything else but that till this mornin' an' then it was 'Captain Farish.' I taught him navigation and was governess for him. Then the old man sent him off to school, and he used to spend holidays aboard with us. Then he went to Harvard, an'—good Lord!—I remember like it was yesterday when he walked into th' old office down on South Street with the fool clothes an' a window in his eye, an' how th' old man flapped him over his knee. Jimmy took his meals off a capstan head for a week after that. Now he's all mixed up with that society outfit, an' it's ruined him since th' old man went below for keeps. Not but what his wife's a good girl, but she wants eleven forks before she can eat her dinner. An' th' boy's th' livin' image of th' little Jimmie I used to hold on my knees at four year old. He was in here last trip down, askin' th' same questions his daddy asked an' sittin' up there like his daddy did—"

The old man dropped his head into his hands and sat thus for a full minute. Standing up suddenly, he dashed the drops from his eyes and squared his great shoulders.

"I'll come back as a passenger, Tom," he said strangely. "Me, a passenger!"

WHEN the Acantha shoved her nose outside the breakwater at Porto Martinez, a heavy gray sea raced swiftly up and slapped her on the port bow with an insistence that sent a shiver through the ship from stern to her earnest propellors, and passed on its way to break in a shower of foam on the heavy stones of the piers. It was the herald of the salt brethren that majestically followed, five to the mile—the great combers that rolled clear across from the other side of the world in their serried ranks of liquid menace. The Acantha shivered, hesitated, seemed to take a long breath, and then with a long swaying plunge that buried her sharp bow over the hawse holes, settled herself down for a long drive up the coast with a comfortable, settled fifteen degree roll and a rhythmic pitch that brought a faint

green tinge to the jaws of the passengers who were not on good terms with Father Neptune.

A tall, square-shouldered, wiry man of sixty-odd, with a pair of keen blue eyes that had an alert peering look in them, leaned against the weather rail on the boat deck. He was dressed in a suit of rough tweeds, and wore a cap of the same material. His two gnarled hands gripped the rail and he stared ahead with a certain grimness that held something of affection in it. His lips showed closely set between the gray beard and moustache, and his broad chest heaved slowly. Occasionally his eye sought the reaches of the bridge above him and forward of where he stood, and a sardonic gleam crept into the keen blue eyes when he caught sight of a blue uniformed figure that paced briskly to and fro upon the structure.

Gradually the daylight faded and the stars began to glimmer from a watery sky that was swept with scurrying wisps of dark cloud. The bugle call for the first meal rang out, and the saloon and cabin ports began to glow with brilliance, but still the old man stood there at the rail, as motionless as the davit near which he leaned. The darkness crept down and still he stood by the rail. Occasionally a steward or a seaman hurrying by glanced curiously at the old man and touched a cap, but he paid no heed. From forward came a thickset figure in blue, and stepping close, laid a hand upon the silent man's arm.

"Going below for a bit of dinner, Captain?" he asked, and gently shook the arm he held. The blue eyes were turned upon him for an instant and the gray head moved negatively from side to side. There was a look of pain in the eyes, too, that bothered the newcomer.

"I'll tell Allison to have something sent up to the cabin for you," the first officer said, but again the older man shook his head.

"No. Let me be, Tom," he replied hoarsely. "I've got to watch her awhile. No one else ever took her out of Martinez but me, and the old ship feels queer about it, I know. Let me be, old friend. I'll turn in after a while, maybe."

The other hesitated, but finally turned away and moved off down the deck. Two hours later he mounted the bridge and looked down on the deck below, and in the darkness, with the faint whiteness of the rushing seas alongside, he saw dimly the great shadow of Captain Farish. He turned away with a sigh and cast a sneering look at the natty figure of the man giving pompous instructions to the quartermaster at the wheel. It was an illuminating tribute to the estimation in which the new skipper was held that the quartermaster solemnly winked at the lookout on the end of the bridge when the skipper turned away. Groome saw it and frowned, but, with the memory of the silent figure on the deck below, he affected not to have seen it.

Two nights in succession the stalwart figure of Captain Farish kept watch and ward just below the sweep of the Acantha's bridge. He made no appearance on deck among the passengers in the day time at all. A quiet, dark-eyed lady, who paced the deck with a sturdy boy of four or five at her side, cast anxious glances here and there, and the child asked a thousand questions.

Captain Bennington was of the social order. He rarely missed a meal in the

saloon, but sat at the head of his table and kept the chatter going. He spent an hour now and then in the smoke room with the male passengers, and was to be seen gallantly escorting the ladies up and down the deck. The third day out, the dark-eyed lady and the little boy stopped the natty Captain Bennington.

"What has become of Captain Farish?" she asked. "Jimmyboy here insists on seeing him. Do you know, Captain?"

The boy stood sturdily before the skipper and looked into his face.

"What are you doing wiv Uncle Ben's clo's on?" he demanded. "I saw you up zere," indicating the bridge. "Uncle Ben won't let peoples up zere—only me," he finished gravely.

Captain Bennington flushed slightly, and then smiled as he patted the small head.

"That is my bridge, now, my little man," he said. "This is my ship, too. Your father gave it to me."

The boy looked at him straightly and distrustfully, and stepped back out of reach of the caressing hand.

"I don't believe you," he remarked quietly after a long inspection, and shoving his hands in his diminutive pockets, marched off and through the companion, where he encountered Steward Allison.

"Where's my Uncle Ben?" he demanded insistently. "You show me. I went up to ze chart room but he isn't zere."

Allison looked up and down, then smiled.

"Hush," he whispered. "You go along up that there passage and bang on th' third door you see, an' call out that it's you."

The sturdy little figure walked off and Allison dodged back into the lounge. Ten minutes afterward Mrs. James Prescott Rothwell, happening to glance through an open port of one of the deck cabins, observed her small son seated comfortably on the knee of Captain Ben Farish, who was constructing a paper ship out of a sheet of note paper. Two minutes later she tapped gently upon the cabin door and smiled when it was opened.

"Why I should be shut out, I can't see," she said, holding out her hand. "Surely I'm as old a friend as Jimmyboy." Again she smiled into the old man's face. "Do I achieve an entrance?"

Captain Farish looked at her earnestly and smiled for the first time in a week.

"Come in," he said, and swung the cabin door wide open.

THE president of the Blue Ball Line stood talking to Captain Peter Bennington in the chart room of the Acantha. Captain Bennington had smilingly outlined his understanding of a commanding officer's duties.

"Sailoring is a business, as I understand it, Mr. Rothwell," he said. "Being a business, it ought to be conducted upon purely business lines. Satisfy the passengers and the shippers, and the dividends will take care of themselves. A skipper should be a business man, and I feel that the day of the elderly man with the romance of the sea in his brain, is done."

Young Mr. Rothwell smiled genially and laid his hand upon the captain's arm.

"My idea exactly, Captain," he said. "I thought I was not mistaken in you. Age must give way to youth and busi-

ness. You carry out your ideas and you will have no cause to complain of the treatment the Blue Ball will give you."

"Thank you, sir," replied Captain Bennington. "I have no fear—"

From down in the bowels of the ship there was a dull report, followed instantly by a sibilant roaring sound that was terrifying to unaccustomed ears. Captain Bennington started, and his face turned pale.

"What's that?" cried Rothwell, quickly catching the other by the arm.

"I—I don't know—that is, I'm not sure—" Bennington replied thickly.

Mr. Groome, the first officer, was standing not ten feet away. He glanced curiously at the pair near him and then quietly picked up the engine-room telephone. The noise below died away.

"What was that, Chief?" he asked. "Oh, all right," he went on, hanging up the instrument.

"Gasket blew out of the auxiliary steam line, sir," he reported, and went out on the bridge. From there he glanced back occasionally into the chart room, and there was a deep line between his eyes that had never been there in the years he had served under Captain Farish. It was the questioning doubt of one man for the wholeness of the other.

That night Captain Farish heard eight bells strike out in the darkness and leaned again upon the weather rail of the old Acantha. The heavy seas raced up out of the darkness, their hissing tops showing faintly white against the surrounding blackness. The old man sighed and strained his eyes ahead. Suddenly, above the singing of the wind and the noise of the smashing waves, he heard a faint hail and pricked up his ears. There was an answering hail from the bridge, and then a strident shout. On the instant he heard Bennington's somewhat shrill voice and the running of footsteps upon the bridge. There was a terrific blast of the whistle and chorus of wild shouts, and before Captain Farish could move there was a slowly crunching, smashing blow that seemed to grind into the very shivering vitals of the Acantha. The ship heeled over and still over. There was a screaming of riven plates and rivets, the ripping of wood and the falling of gear, the rending sounds that go with torn metal, and the awful shaking of the ship.

Her engines still drove her remorselessly ahead, and the smashing and tearing of the wounded side made a terrifying babel of sound. From below there came screams of fright, shouts of men trying to quiet the panic-stricken passengers, and the racing feet of the men who hurried to the point of disaster. At the first impact Captain Farish had sprung around the deck and was thrown heavily backward by a piece of smashed timber that struck him on the shoulder. Looking quickly aloft he saw Bennington, white-faced and terror-stricken, leaning over the bridge rail, screaming useless questions at some dark figures on the forecastle below.

Captain Farish picked himself up and peered into the smother before him. A hulking black shape that resolved itself into a six masted schooner was grinding, a mass of broken timber, in the wounded side of the Acantha. As the big ship forged ahead, the schooner, which had evidently come driving down upon the steamer's bow from leeward, swung around with a further rending of her shattered bow. The smashing, grinding uproar continued, and with a final heave,

much like a dog shaking himself free of a clinging enemy, the Acantha tore herself away from the schooner and rolled ahead with a terrific tearing of timbers. The schooner dropped back, and in the faint light from the deck lanterns of the steamer, and from her port-side light which stained the scene a dull red, Captain Farish could see that the whole bow of the wooden vessel had been ground and torn away, leaving a vast, cavernous opening into which the sea was rushing like a mill race. Even as he gazed the wreck sank lower and lower in the water. From her decks came the cry of doomed men, and as she disappeared in the darkness astern, the engine-room telegraph of the Acantha clanged below. On the bridge the old man caught a glimpse of the first officer, half clad, but cool and collected, with his hand on the telegraph handle.

Astern there came a terrific wail that cut the darkness, and then a tense silence. With a catch at his heart that ended in a sob Farish knew that the schooner had disappeared, taking with her the only men afloat who could tell why she had run down and rammed the great steamer.

Up from below poured the frightened passengers in all stages of undress. Stewards and officers ran about among them endeavoring to quell the tumult, and Captain Farish felt rather than saw that panic had seized upon the ship. He knew that Captain Bennington had lost his head completely and was issuing conflicting orders that only served to increase the confusion. Groome strove hard to bring order out of the chaos that was beginning to reign, but he was handicapped by the law of the sea which makes the captain king aboard his ship. The Acantha was listed somewhat to port, and down by the bow. Captain Bennington thrust his white face over the port-bridge rail, stared anxiously and affrighted at the wreck below him, and screamed an order.

"Out boats!" he cried. "Pass the word for boat stations!"

Captain Farish saw Groome catch at his commander and try to show him that the time for abandoning ship had not arrived, but the man thrust him aside furiously and reiterated his orders. His fear spread instantly to the affrighted crowds below him, who on the moment began a rush for the boats. Of the scene that followed those who partook of it had never a clear vision or remembrance. Farish found himself standing at the rent side of the ship with the carpenter who had come up to report that while she was taking water, but two of the forward compartments had been opened, and that if the bulkheads held there was no danger. He shoved the man toward the bridge.

"Tell him!" he cried. "For God's sake tell him there is no danger!"

He saw the carpenter make his way to where the frenzied captain was hurling wild orders right and left, and cry his news. He saw the momentary pause, and the disbelief in Bennington's face, and he saw him strike the carpenter to one side. Groome threw up his hands in a gesture of despair and drawing a revolver from his pocket sprang below to clear a space about the first boat he came to. Farish, with a deep groan of despair at the folly of it all, turned to render what aid he could and found himself beside President Rothwell, who, with his wife and child beside him, was shoving a frenzied way to the number 4 boat on the starboard side.

"Jimmy!" cried Captain Farish. "Stop it, man! There's no danger, I tell you! That coward up there will have the souls of everyone aboard on his conscience in half an hour if you don't stop him!"

Rothwell looked at him crazily, and a desperate fear shone in his wild eyes.

"He knows! He knows!" he gasped. "Get me aboard a boat, Captain! I'll give you ten thousand dollars to get me aboard a boat!"

There was the hoarse note of a siren that boomed even above the roar of the Acantha's exhaust pipes, and down to leeward shone the myriad lights of a liner. The sound caught Bennington's frenzied ear, and seizing the whistle cord he sent a distress call screaming over the waves. Captain Farish stopped suddenly, and a grim smile came to his face. Stepping to the side of the ship he looked over. There was considerable sea still running, but nothing dangerous. The Acantha was fairly steady.

Fifteen minutes later the sea was dotted with the boats of the Acantha and those of the Vulcan the steamer that had come up. Bennington had made his wireless operator send a distress call, and the Vulcan's skipper, knowing nothing of the actual condition of affairs, but that a ship was in distress and lives apparently in danger, called away his boats like the brave, alert seaman that he was, and proceeded to take the passengers off.

Dawn was beginning to break over the horizon's edge when the last of the boats pulled away from the rolling Acantha, now deep down by the head. Captain Bennington had dropped hurriedly into the third boat away, and just before he slid down the falls Captain Farish had seen him throw his cap aside and remove his uniform coat. The sight nauseated him. Mrs. Rothwell stood at his side as he turned away.

"The coward!" she breathed, and looked into Farish's drawn face, then laid her hand upon his arm.

"Tell me, is there great danger?" she asked.

He laughed shortly.

"If I was in command I'd forbid a man or woman to leave the ship," he said shortly.

"But Jimmy says—" she began, and stopped with a flush.

"There is no danger," he reiterated quietly. "Still you must go with him, of course."

"Helen! Helen!" cried a frenzied voice in the shadows, and President Rothwell dashed up and clutched his wife by the arm. "Here! Hurry! Hurry! In this boat!"

He dragged her away in his terror, and Farish saw him force her into a boat already well filled. She turned to ask him an anxious question, and Farish could see him give her a hasty assurance. The order was given and the falls were loosed while the boat dropped away down the sixty towering feet of the sheer side of the Acantha, with the men fending it off from the ship's side as it slid down toward the tumbling waters below.

Contemptuously Captain Farish watched the last boat-load pull away in the faint light, laughed grimly to himself as he saw it hoisted up the side of the waiting Vulcan, and gripped his hands with rage as the great ship gathered way and resumed her course to the south.

He turned with a sob of disgust to find Groome, his face cut and scratched and his uniform in rags, standing behind

him, with tears in his eyes. He started, then put out his hand quickly and gripped that of the first officer. For a moment they stared into each other's eyes and then grinned understandingly. There was a shuffling above them.

"He'yo!" said a rather faint small voice, and both men looked up to see a pathetically small figure in a long night dress peering through the rails of the bridge. "Say, what'll we do now, Uncle Ben?" the figure demanded.

Captain Farish was up the bridge ladder in two bounds, and there was a wonderful light in his eyes as he caught the boy up in his great arms and tossed him aloft.

"Do?" he cried with a roar of joy. "Do?" he reiterated. "Why, we'll take the old hooker in to port an' ask no odds of any man, help either!"

THERE was a frantic woman aboard the Vulcan shortly after the last boat had been hoisted up her side—a woman who had lost the treasure of her heart, a four-year old boy, and her only child. The ship's doctor had his hands full from then on until the Vulcan berthed at Havana, where the woman, a wild, grief-stricken wreck of herself, was taken ashore, clinging, fighting, hysterically, and demanding to be taken back to where her little child had gone down.

The story was well told, and not a word of Captain Bennington or his conduct ever reached the public. The passengers did not see, and the officers to whom his panic had communicated itself could not accuse him. Two days the story lasted, and the skipper of the Vulcan was the recipient, and justly, of the praise that was lavishly bestowed. Then the matter was dropped from the public prints and slipped back into the history of the sea.

The Acantha was written off the marine register, and only one solitary word followed her name: "Foundered."

THERE is a marine observatory that holds a very keen-eyed man with a pair of excellent binoculars ready to his hand at a point quite close to Cape Henry, and he had been lazily preparing himself to turn over his watch to his comrade when the sun began to show redly above the watery horizon to the eastward. He yawned and glanced at the calendar, which showed that four days had elapsed since the Acantha had slid out of the Vulcan's view. Tom Terry had been reading the latest account in the New York Herald, and he raised his eyes to see a drift of smoke across the sky. Perfunctorily he picked up the glasses at his hand and focussed them upon the slowly approaching ship.

"Um," he muttered. "Too far off yet, but she looks like one of the Blue Ball boats."

He bent his eyes again on the Herald. The sun had risen and the sea was glittering with its radiance when he looked up again. The big steamer he could now see was well down by the head and was moving slowly. From the Roads two tugs and a pilot boat sped out toward the newcomer. Suddenly Terry dropped his paper and strained his eyes through the glasses.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "It's the Acantha! I'd know that raking oval funnel of hers in Hades!"

For an instant wonderment and amazement overcame him, and then he fell upon his telegraph key. An instant later the world began to learn that the lost Acantha was limping home between

the Capes and that she seemed able to weather more of the Atlantic swells.

To the pilot who stepped aboard to find two weary, dragged-out men with blear eyes, and grimy hands and clothes, standing at the gangway amid a litter of smashed and splintered plates and tackle, they said in reply to his question of astonishment:

"She's all right. Take her in!"

The pilot peered at them wonderingly, then turned to Captain Ben.

"Is your name Farish?" he asked. And when the old man had nodded, he put forth his hand. "I'm proud to know a man," he said. "There'll be a pretty bit of salvage here for you two."

Captain Farish grinned and turned aside. From around the corner of the deck house came a small figure in a dirty white sailor suit, wearing the cap—miles too large—of a captain of the Blue Ball Line. This diminutive figure lined up beside the old skipper and saluted the pilot gravely. The pilot looked inquiringly at the captain, who nodded soberly at him.

"There'll be no salvage here, my lad," he said. "We've got one of the owners aboard."

An hour later a special train was hurrying a praying, thankful, weeping woman northward to where the said owner was eating ice cream in a large hotel dining room and assuring an admiring horde of reporters that not only had Captain Benjamin Farish not resigned as commodore of the Blue Ball Line, but that he was not going to resign, either, but was going to stay right on the job, and that he, the said owner—aged four—had the utmost, perfect, and sincere confidence in him, and he would now have some more ice cream.

The Good News

By FRANK GILLOOLY

IN their cheerless dining room, with its sober furnishings, the Hollands were at their three o'clock dinner. It was mid-afternoon, yet a darkness weighted the earth. The great drops of rain and the lumps of hail battered against the window panes by the storm that rattled the house, infused an uncanniness to aid the gloomy day in deadening their spirits. Milton Holland hurried through the meal, while his wife picked at her food. As though induced by the friction of the elements, a current of anger charged the room.

"Milton, I do wish you didn't have to work at night!" Eva Holland murmured. Her husband made no acknowledgment.

"It's so dreadfully lonesome!" she ventured. "Sometimes I'm afraid!"

"Perhaps you would rather be in Russia," he said, not raising his head.

"Oh, I'm thankful for what I have, but we don't seem to be getting anywhere!"

"Be contented with your fortune in having a home and sufficient to eat in these uncertain times," he declaimed; and for a while she was silent.

"Take the night off and stay home with me, won't you, Milt?"

"Stay home from work! Are you in earnest? You know how little we can afford the loss of a day's pay. And who would take my place of duty with such scant notice?"

"Oh, I'm sick of your old job! I'm always alone at night! And cooped up here in the old city! Why can't we get away from here and move into the country?"

Milton straightened in his chair. A trace of color appeared in his face, which showed all its hungry hollows as his eyes went half shut and a furrow formed above his nose where his heavy eyebrows were humped in a frown.

"It strikes me, Eva, that you might lend me some encouragement, and at least pretend appreciation of my efforts. Have you no ambition beyond your idiotic whim for the country? I have shown you the better things that must come, and—"

"But what good is it doing us to stay in the city?" Eva persisted. "We could have a lovely place out at Runnymeade, with a little garden that I could nurse; and you could get a job in the mill there. Mr. Griffin got—"

"Damn Grif—! Eva, shall I never rest from your bickering?" Milton flung his napkin on the table and tramped from the room. A moment later the house door banged behind him.

Eva Holland stared after her husband. He had yelled at her! And he had cursed! Pent-up tears smarted her eyes. The dining room appeared an indistinct, vast, desolate place. Running upstairs, she threw herself upon her bed to sob her trials to it. There were things about Milton that she never would know. She could not fathom his thought processes. It seemed that she never would

really know him. No one could know him. But she was his wife. He claimed to love her. And he had shown anger toward her!

"The first time in our three married years that he has left without kissing me," she cried into her pillow.

The summons of the doorbell interrupted her gloom. In the vestibule she picked up a letter, a long, official-looking letter, addressed to him. She stood there puzzling over it; went to the parlor window to study it; carried it to her room and sat on the bed and stared at it; then she tore it open.

"At last, he's got a good job! Now we'll move to the country!" she cried, when she had read the summons from the Navy Department for him to report at the League Island Yard for the position of station engineer.

"I must phone him the good news! Good news, Milt. The good news!" A doubt worried her. What good news? Recollection swept her, and brought back the tears.

"He went away without kissing me. I won't call him! I won't speak to him till he begs forgiveness!"

She awoke from her doze, bewildered. Downstairs, she was surprised that it was seven o'clock. After sipping a cup of tea and munching at some crackers and jelly, she gladly forsook the kitchen. The newspaper failed to interest her. She took up her sewing, and laid it away again. The memory of the afternoon weighed on her as she straightened up the kitchen, and she wondered why she should need Milton's companionship so badly to-night.

"The same old walled-in house in a walled-in street! The same old routine, the same old canned foods, over and over!" she mumbled, as she knelt raking the fire. Swept by a wave of anger at the remembrance of Milton's parting words, she lunged so savagely with the poker that a shower of coals flew from the range. Frightened, she leaped back; and as spirals of smoke began curling upward from the floor, she scooped the sparkling coals into the shovel and tossed them into the grate. The room was heavy with smoke, and the nauseating odor of burnt linoleum distressed her. She swept at the floor, heedless of the areas that the broom never reached, gazing ruefully at the black holes left by the embers.

The smoke was still in her nostrils as she snapped off the light and, with a pounding headache, took herself upstairs. Soon she was in a troubled doze in which Milton and the Griffins fought over her, while long, open country roads and bleak city streets whirled past her, and cans of food, recalcitrant ranges, dishes, pans, chairs, all danced jeeringly round her.

Out amongst the coal yards, the sand and lumber wharfs, and the railroads that filled a wide bend in the Schuylkill River at Grays Ferry, stood a fine, red-brick building that extended several blocks back into the city. Machinery forever hummed in it. Giant smoke-stacks towered from its roof. Coal-laden railroad cars waited in its yard, like the coal barges at its dock, to yield their wealth of black mineral to the greedy, endless chain of carriers winding to and from the plant. For all the havoc worked on their furnishings by the lava of coal dust rained from its stacks, the smattering of lowly neighbors thought less unkindly of the insti-

tution than did the rugged tugboat captains traveling the river, who vociferously damned the genus electricity that must have its origin in a factory which, in sucking out and tossing back into the river great volumes of water, raised tides and currents for them to battle in maneuvering their craft.

On this stormy December afternoon, a tension held those within this immense power house, the Grays Ferry Station of the Edison Electric Company, where four monster turbines were grinding out a part of the electricity consumed in the great city. The darkness required lamps to glow everywhere. The stormy day saw train and car waste energy as they crept and slipped on sleeted rails.

Up in the glass-enclosed operating gallery, amid the maze of devices, switchboard operators manipulated their control apparatus and studied the meters registering the demand on the station. On the close, noisy turbine floor hovered men alert for the slightest change in sound of their machines. Out in the smoke-clouded boiler house, firemen turned valves to satisfy the thirst of their boilers, and moved levers to feed them more coal and to increase the draft that expedited the consuming of that coal. Deep in the cellars, out of sight of the fruit of their labors, men sweated in oily heat as they mothered multitudes of pumps for distributing oil and water throughout the plant and for collecting each and discarding it into storage tank or river. Coal into heat, water into steam, steam into electricity—the transforming process never relented.

Around his apparatus paced head-oiler Milton Holland, resentment rife in him. Eva was forever nagging him; he was tired of it. Barely a moment's peace could he enjoy. If only she would be patient! His rage succumbed to remorse as he recalled his parting with her. Poor girl, conditions appeared discouraging to her. She tried to sustain her faith in him, and to offset her inability to share the visions of his ambition by substituting his love for the material fortunes her woman's heart craved.

As affairs at home brightened in his thoughts they were dismissed by worries of work. He had sensed the strain on the station; now he began to appreciate it. Since taking his post at four o'clock he had been fulfilling his duties automatically. It was almost six o'clock, and they were at the peak of the load. He studied the load meter of one of the units, and whistled. Thirty-seven thousand kilowatts! Nearly two hundred thousand horsepower on the station.

He was struck by the discomposure of the engineer. Old Skipper Reese plainly was ill at ease. Holland wondered. Then he noticed the quietness of the assistant engineer, for whom a serious attitude was strange conduct. Corbett seemed affected by the same foreboding that had Skipper Reese in its clutches.

Returning at seven o'clock from his supper in the station restaurant, Holland was stopped by Corbett.

"Take care of things for me, will you, Holland?" he coaxed. "Been out with the boys since last night, and I'm all shot up."

The square dark face of the man was unusually flushed; the mean little eyes were bloodshot from want of sleep; his whole squatty, animal bulk was shaking. Holland's countenance betrayed the disgust with which he perceived in Corbett's condition the cause of the old engineer's concern.

"Lay off that holy indignation stuff!" jeered Corbett. "Be a sport, Holland. Hold my end up while I knock off some sleep," he begged.

Holland glumly considered the situation. Skipper Reese led a miserable existence because of Corbett. An engineer of the old school, he was not impressed by advanced machine design. The complex mechanism to regulate and record every operation of the modern machine seemed senselessly complicated to him; he yearned for former providential ways, where frequent shutdowns when machinery mysteriously stalled were acceptable. Corbett had advanced with the new machinery, he knew no other kind, and this advantage over the older man he despicably exploited. He overrode the Skipper, who lacked the stamina to combat him.

No moral principles burdened Corbett to deter him from making the Skipper unhappy, nor from making any one unhappy. Just now others must do his work, while somewhere below he recovered from his night's debauch. He had neither family nor relatives to regret his misconduct. But others must suffer! Holland's thoughts reverted to home.

Eva deserved better things, dear girl. He was remorseful at the recollection of his parting with her. His ill spirits had been the climax of long days of disappointments. He should have more income. He must have it! He had sought for a position at the Navy Yard; had counted on it; for weeks had awaited word from it, though he had said nothing to Eva, intending to surprise her with the good news. Hope of getting the job was ended; someone surely was appointed long since.

Life had not dealt kindly with Holland. He and Eva had toiled to do their part honorably. Living expenses had mounted. The rent of their home had repeatedly risen; now they were to lose it, unless they could buy it. Houses for rent, there were none. And the price stipulated for theirs was exorbitant. Eva wanted to go to the country where conditions were even worse than in the cities. Everywhere people were being forced to buy their homes, or were being mercilessly evicted. Realty values were inflated. Storage warehouses were filled with the furnishings of broken homes. He had hoarded sufficient money for an initial payment on his home; but a doctor's bill was to face them soon, and with their other existing and coming expenses they could not continue the payments on their present income.

Corbett owned houses, who neither needed nor deserved them; and he boasted of the pleasures he had on his gains from them. A man needed pleasurable diversion, brute-man enjoyments, claimed Corbett, a man without principle, respect, or responsibility to family or home. Yet the men who paid the interest on holdings such as his, and who could not buy his pleasures, must find their diversion within the toil of maintaining a home leashed by the taxes of his greed. And, like Corbett, just now there were many men who seemingly found enjoyment in their victims' discomfiture. The world seemed unjust.

He deserved promotion, had earned it. He should have Corbett's position. Corbett was incapable. The mammoth Edison system depended upon every station. Each station depended upon every man and machine. Each monster turbine depended upon every link in its complicated, delicate governor gearing

to guide it and prevent it from wrecking itself. With the abnormal demand on the station, should one of those turbines fail the plant would collapse and the whole system be affected. The assistant engineer was the man directly responsible; were any accident to occur; he, Corbett, must answer for the consequences. While he was hidden in the cellar, in his unfit condition, if something were to— Holland found himself wishing that the thing would occur, frightened at the enormity of the thought.

His reflections were interrupted by Skipper Reese. Forty-three years of service as an engineer, which had earned him his title of "skipper" in many plants, showed plainly in the appearance of the man. His bony body was stooped sidewise, and he walked with his left shoulder elevated and thrust forward, giving him the appearance of habitually jostling his way through a jam. His red face was deeply seamed. His pale eyes squinted through heavy spectacles never right on his nose. Completely white was his thin hair. The gnarled, red hands of him bore heavily the scars of time and toil. As he flitted about the machines, his troubled glances studied each instrument board and his abused hands caressed each machine bearing.

"Well, Milton, son, we're holding her down!" he cried, but his voice was not certain.

Corbett was not mentioned, but Holland knew the Skipper's thoughts. The old man depended upon him; yet, officially, Corbett got the credit. It was unfair. For some reason, the Skipper feared Corbett.

It was long after nine o'clock, and the full evening load was still on. Holland's thoughts were in a turmoil. If Corbett were out of the way. He would get the job, with its greater salary that he so badly needed. Corbett should lose out, the scoundrel! He tried to change his thoughts, cursing Corbett for them, but the vision of the plant in darkness with the assistant engineer unconscious in the cellar persisted in haunting him. And then suddenly came the whole plan; he saw how easily it could be done: a piece of string would do it, a little cord tied to the emergency throttle would release that big valve and stall the turbine. The idea became a temptation.

After making a round of the apparatus, noting the temperature, steam pressure, vacuum, inspecting the oiling system and the condenser pumps, Holland paused at the engineer's desk, midway down the room. His glance was soon drawn to a half open drawer of the desk, and there lay a ball of twine. At once his thoughts were on the emergency trip. For a long time he gazed at the ball of twine, wearily battling the temptation, then he snatched up the ball and stuffed it into his pocket. Behind the throttle of No. 4 Unit, out of sight of any one on the turbine floor or any one looking down from the glass-walled switchboard room, he measured off two lengths of the cord, and replaced the rest in the desk.

Around each turbine was a foot and more of space where the concrete floor ended that much short of the unit's foundation structure. On the galleries below were the gigantic condenser and the various pumps for the unit. Near the gauge board, a few feet from the throttle, were the controllers for the motors driving the pumps and the big valves. Holland suspended one cord from the back of the lever of the con-

denser pump controller, letting it dangle out of sight into the cellar.

The emergency valve rod was hooked on a spring-locked steel latch-block. The block was tripped by a trigger suspended so that at a critical speed the governor weights would strike it, causing it to release the latch and allow the rod to slide over and drop the valve. A blow on the latch spring would unhook it. Holland laid out his second cord, but his fingers trembled and he dared not touch the sensitive governor mechanism; instead he fastened the cord to a near-by pipe. In the cellar he secured a six-inch jam nut, and to this he tied both cords and set it up on a ledge in the foundation wall.

His work was almost complete. A turn of the controller handle would pull that string, dragging the massive nut off the ledge. The weight of the nut thrown on the string to the emergency trip would unhook the spring and close the throttle valve. Both cords would then be released, and the weight of the nut would drag them into the cellar where he would later recover them.

Several times he was halted by visions of his crime; each time thoughts of home and the danger of losing it came also; then he would grit his teeth and resume the grim work, hating the man who blocked his way to success here.

That end of the turbine hall seemed deserted. The Skipper was up at No. 1 Unit, talking to an oiler. The other two oilers were not far from them. Removing the cord from the controller, Holland slowed the air pump until the vacuum had dropped to twenty-four inches. Immediately the load of the unit started to drop. He had not a moment to lose. Already the whirring of the governor motor told him that the operator was forcing more steam into the unit.

He tried to fasten the cord on the emergency trip, but his fingers failed him. What if he bungled the thing, or was caught at it! It meant ruin, the wrecking of his career as an engineer. He could not do this thing; he was mad to think of it! The service! He must speed that pump before trouble occurred. Service could not be interrupted!

The memory of his quarrel with Eva returned; the whole picture of the dismal dinner that dreary afternoon sprang up to confront him. Their home, hardly furnished, lacking all the refinements, all the luxuries that he and Eva had dreamed of and planned in the rosy days of their courtship. Lately her eyes had acquired an anxious look. Gray was appearing in his hair. He and Eva were young, yet they were becoming embittered. And things would go on so—become worse when they lost their home! Of all the gougers of the poor, the landlords were the worst. Corbett was one of them. And he had it in his power to ruin him!

His fingers steadied; his mind cooled; warmth returned to his body. Grasping the latch-block, he wound the cord through the spring and reset it. Then he hurried to the gallery below and began to prepare an idle condenser pump.

Out in the boiler house, perplexed firemen wiped the soot from the dials of their instruments to read them better, wondering why their fires failed them. Stokers and fans were accelerated, still the pressure went down. In the operating room, the failing steam pressure and the dropping load on No. 4 Unit had been noticed. Voltage and frequency

were low, and the other stations were all calling on Grays Ferry to hold its load.

Down the floor hurried Skipper Reese, frantically peering at each instrument board. At No. 4 Unit his heart jumped when he read its vacuum. He darted to the controller to speed the shirking pump, and jammed it wide open. A sharp crack, then a jar which he instinctively recognized, and he realized that what he had sought to forestall had happened. No. 4 Unit had shut down! He leaped for the big valve to reset the trip, when a streak of brown flashed before him and shot from the emergency block into the cellar.

As though gripped by an airbrake, No. 4 turbine slowed down under the drag of the load on it with only its own momentum to propel it, while the building shook from its vibrations. Lights went to a sickening red as the speed of the other machines dropped. The hideous screech of the "trouble" whistle was added to the weird noise of the grinding machines. From the switch gallery came a green flare and an explosion rapidly repeated as the tie lines from the other stations automatically opened. For a moment the whole plant was dark, until the station lights were switched over on the storage battery.

In the big generating station in time of trouble a degree of excitement prevails which is not exceeded by that existing in the big metropolitan fire station when an alarm is being received. Nor do either set of men even from long years of service ever become immune to that thrill which motivates them into galvanic action then. Then more than ever in the power house is there the danger of failure of the apparatus, with its consequent likelihood of injury to its operators, and what is even more considered, the possibility of interruption to the service. The central station must supply dependable service. There can be no failing of the energy so vital to the life of the metropolis. There must be no breakdown in the supply of it that would plunge the city's streets in night's blackness; that would darken its homes, its peopled theatres, its hospitals; or that would halt in darkness its trains and street cars, its underground and overhead railways, the elevators high in its skyscraper buildings; and stop the machinery in its factories.

In the Grays Ferry Station now almost anything might happen. When No. 4 Unit had dropped its vacuum and reversed its status of generator to that of motor, wasting more energy than it had been delivering, generators and boilers had become swamped and their effectiveness reduced. The switchboard operators had apprehended the faulty unit and switched it off the busbar, but too late. The lowered steam pressure had brought with it a drop in frequency and voltage at Grays Ferry, causing a heavy inrush of energy over the tie feeders from the other stations, which had automatically switched themselves out, isolating Grays Ferry with its trouble. Desperate measures were imperative. In the glass cage one operator nodded to the other and both acted. Thunderous circuit breakers pounded in the switch gallery while block after block of load was being thrown off to relieve the station; first the street lighting was dropped, then the railways, and finally the building lighting.

The boiler house recovered, and the voltage and speed of the machines in-

creased with the steam pressure. No. 4 was brought up and synchronized against the other units. Grays Ferry went in parallel with Thurlow Station over its tie lines, and more energy was obtained. Gradually the lost load was recovered; eleven minutes after the trouble began, the station had entirely recovered.

Reese, at the throttle of No. 4 Unit, squinted hard as a touseled-haired, bleared-eyed, dirty, flushed face emerged from the cellar, and a moment later Corbett lurched across the floor.

ONE hideous dream after another racked Eva as she lay in a state of neither sleepfulness nor wakefulness. As each dream ended she tried to rouse herself. A terrible something was oppressing her, some hideous thing was weighing her down. She wanted to cough and could not, nor could she scream. She tried to break free of the terrible clutches, and could not move. Her surroundings she could not recognize. She was in a spaceless, black place that heaved and rocked, like the dark hull of some great boat. Strange lights danced above her and in the fog on all sides of her. And ever the thing gripped her throat.

A woman's screams and the full-throated yells of men brought her upright in bed. There was a pounding in her head, which felt light and dizzy, and the hot dryness of her throat gagged her. She groped her way around and opened the bedroom door, but staggered back under the assault of a blast of hot smoke that reflected the flames roaring up the stairway a few feet away. Somewhere some one was calling her name. She found her way to the bay window of the room. Leaning out of the window of the adjoining house, Mrs. Wesley, her neighbor, was calling her.

"For heaven's sake, Eva, I thought you were dead! Come over here to my house, before you get burnt alive!"

The smoke sometimes hid the neighboring window, eighteen feet away. The rain and wind beating through her night dress made her shake, and her bare feet smarted on the icy tin of the porch roof as she climbed out on it. She began to slip on the sloping roof and, gripping the ridged seams of the tin, she crawled backwards down to the level gutter at the roof's edge; standing up, she once more started across. Her path was made fairly plain through the smoke by the light from Mrs. Wesley's window and from the electric arc light directly across the street.

Her throat was so sore that she could make no sound, and the dizziness was still in her head. She wanted to speak, to scream, to reassure herself by the sound of her own voice that she was not in the throes of some horrible nightmare. Suddenly, Mrs. Wesley's light went dim, and the arc lamp clicked and flickered, darting shadows across the glistening roof to confuse her. Mrs. Wesley's directions and the orders shouted from below came in a jumble of sound. Down the street a clamorous din of fire bells grew louder.

With a final click the arc light went out, and the noise from below increased. Her feet became uncertain as the smoky darkness engulfed her. She hesitated, then as Mrs. Wesley's voice came authoritatively, she bravely essayed the remaining distance. She took a step, slipped, stood trembling and swaying, then stepped out again, cautiously, hesitatingly. Down, down went her foot

without touching the roof, then she lurched forward and, still unable to scream, plunged toward the sidewalk, twenty-three feet below.

In the Grays Ferry power house, head-oiler Milton Holland was stopped in his nervous pacing of the turbine hall by the watch engineer, Skipper Reese.

"Milton, son, let me shake hands with you. Bring your engineer's license in to-morrow and hang it on the board. The boss gave you the job, and your salary increase starts from the first of this month."

"You're a white man, son," the Skipper continued. "I saw how worried you were all afternoon over Corbett's conduct, but you never peached on him, and when the trouble happened you were the first one on the job with that spare pump. I told all that to the boss."

The Skipper was completely shaken. He must talk to some one, and mistaking Holland's silence for sympathy, was comforted by the companionship.

"This thing may kill me! I'm an old man, son, and a shock like this is bad."

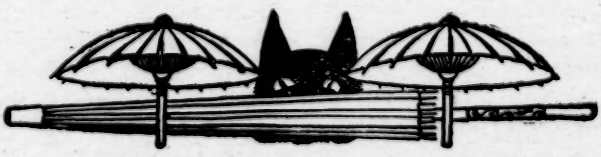
His eyes became wistful, straying off down the room. "I've only got six months to go before I retire, Milton, son, and the boss has promised me that you get my job. I've got several pieces of property rented out, and their income will keep Mom and me in style for the few days I've got left to enjoy. But, of course, my pension will help, too!"

Anger shook him as he recalled his former assistant. "That skunk Corbett owed me money, that's why I didn't fire his long ago. Now I'll never get it, the cur!" he raged. "But I had to fire him to-night," he continued, sadly. "An engineer always does his duty, Milton, son; always does his duty. I did mine to-night!"

The old man's words burned in Holland when he resumed his restless pacing, remorse and satisfaction taking their turns at saddening him or making him joyous. In his pocket the touch of a lump of twine tortured him, and in his thoughts the memory of several things tormented him. Somehow, the joy in his fortune was not so great as he had anticipated.

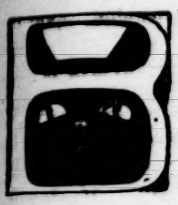
"Hell!" he muttered, shaking himself. He tried to force a laugh, but it died miserably on his lips. Then he glanced at the big white clock embedded in the turbine hall wall.

"Twenty minutes to twelve! Twenty minutes more, then I'll be free to start home and break the good news to Eva. Good news, Eva. The good news!"



Partners in Romance

By JEAN MAHAN PLANK



INNER, a kind, conventional little man in a gray suit, turned his field glasses upon the bathers over on the mainland, where the casino and bath houses were.

"That girl in the red cap," he called to Lea, "looks like Miss Bila. Come and see—she's going to dive from the boat. Why—great Scott, Lea, it is Miss Bila! Did you know she was here?"

At this mention of his stenographer's name, Haskell Lea strode impetuously up the moss grown, flagged steps of the path that skirted the corner of the hotel. From a low bluff, standing beside his friend, he looked out, through leaning, white-barked birches, and stocky pines, upon the blue waters of a fairy lake encircling a miniature island in Wisconsin. He spoke sternly.

"Bosh! Miss Bila's on her vacation in Michigan. You saw her address, Binner, on a route card in the office."

"Well, either I'm color blind or Miss Bila's on her vacation right in the lake there."

Lea snatched the glasses from Binner's hand. "You certainly are off your —By George!"

Binner's "What did I tell you?" was a trifle faint, but Lea did not notice. Through the lenses, the girl standing in the bow of the boat was outlined against the water like an angel poised for flight. The pure profile, warmed by a slight strain of semitic beauty, was brought into relief by the little crimson bathing cap, which concealed, as Lea well knew, a quantity of heavy, dark hair. The strange irritation he had felt of late toward the girl increased. It impelled him, nevertheless, to get out into the lake where she was. With becoming nonchalance, he conveyed that determination to Binner.

"But I'm not going," returned his friend ruefully. At Lea's look of surprise, he added, "I didn't tell you—but—before Miss Bila left Aurora, I asked her to marry me."

Lea's astonishment wore the hues of indignation.

"What did she say?" he demanded crisply.

"She said she wouldn't marry the best man on earth."

Lea mused over that very original sentiment with a scowl, but presently extended a pale sympathy to his friend, who took possession of a bench and lit a cigar.

The scowl did not lighten as Lea boarded the crude ferry crossing between the island and the bathing beach. Binner was all right—a brick usually—but *that* was presumption.

Ten minutes later, he was swimming with bold, confident strokes and a full consciousness that his handsome purple bathing suit and the terra cotta colored cap on his good-looking head gave him no small advantage. He neared a small raft upon which Esther Bila was sitting with a couple of chattering girls. At sight of her employer, the stenographer's

accustomed demureness disappeared in a smothered cry:

"Mr. Lea!"

The man laughed as the girl's face flushed to a lovely rose under its tan. He laid hold of a corner of the raft.

"We're both truants, you observe. I had a birthday and eloped, leaving Ward to guard the office to-day and Monday till one o'clock when I'll be back. But you—your route card says—"

"Oh, Mr. Ward will have my wire by now. We came only last night, and suddenly. Will it make any—"

"Not a bit!" Lea struck away from the raft and waited with abnormal patience, floating and swimming about, until the talkative young women left Esther sitting alone. Then with a half dozen bold strokes, he was on the spot. He seized the rude craft and, swimming rapidly, pushed it far out, beyond the most venturesome bathers.

The girl gasped. "Why, Mr. Lea, what do you—"

"It's all right," he admonished her, "you sit still or you might get tipped over."

Esther, sitting meekly quiet, her knees drawn up and her slender feet close together, pushed some stray locks under her cap with her small brown hands. She laughed a little. As she glanced furtively at Lea, a soft light in her dark eyes belied the proud curve of her red lips.

Presently, with the water up to his broad shoulders, but with his feet touching a rise of ground, Lea stopped and looked at the girl, and his jaw squared.

"Now, see here," he said grimly, "I want to talk to you, and this is the best way to get you alone. What do you mean, or *why* have you taken the very absurd stand—the cheap attitude, moreover, if you'll allow me to be really truthful—that you wouldn't marry the best man on earth? Oh, I've heard of your saying it, and heard you say it, too. Don't you know that it touches upon the worst of all class hatreds—woman against man? And class hatred is even worse than race hatred. Stay where you are! If you attempt to get off this raft, I'll dive around to you and duck you under till you choke. You've got to tell me what's the matter with all mankind that you speak of us as if we were gorillas or something. Haven't you always been well treated by men? Take in my office, for instance—"

"Of course I've been treated right there—wonderfully," the girl answered hotly, "and that's the reason I prefer being a stenographer to being a wife. It's a much happier relation, according to my observations. I've seen enough of women's husband's—nice men, too—but doling out money to their wives as if they were doing them the greatest favor. There isn't a woman I know, either among the wives of the business men I meet, or among the friends of my family, that can walk up to her husband and demand every month seventy-five dollars clear, as I can from you. There isn't a business girl I know who doesn't dress a sight better than the married women whose husbands are in the same work. Mrs. Ayers told me herself—and Mr. Ayers is the highest salaried state agent that comes into your office—that her allowance for clothes is fifteen dollars a month! Why, fifteen dollars would just about keep me in hats, gloves and shoes, and I'm not extravagant either.

"I want to tell you I've thought a lot about the economic position of married

women since I've been in your office, and I don't intend to put myself where I have to wheedle five dollars out of a man when I need twenty-five, and he has a right to refuse me both. I don't intend to marry; but if I did, there'd have to be a contract drawn up in black and white, making me an equal partner in financial affairs. I'll have no man dole out dollars to me while I kiss his hand in humble gratitude."

The girl paused and choked a bit with mingled earnestness and indignation at being held a prisoner.

"Then look how it is when the man dies. His wife is left alone at fifty or so with perhaps ten thousand dollars and a little home. That's putting it higher than the average provision. At fifty it's practically impossible for a woman to start in and learn how to make a decent living. She can't support a home of any kind on the income from ten thousand dollars—fifty dollars a month. She has to sell the home, and usually at half the investment, live for a few years on her principal, then become dependent—on somebody.

"I tell you I've seen it all, and I've thought it all out. I prefer to work up in business, and have some sort of independence without having to beg and wheedle my way along, which is what the married women I know are doing. I prefer to be in business all my life, save money, and have it."

She considered for an instant then added with a heightening of color in her rounded cheeks:

"It isn't that I don't appreciate that there are such things as love and home and all that. I'd like them myself; but marriage with me has got to be on something of an equality basis. I'm not going to be any man's lap-dog and have bones flung to me at his pleasure."

The breeze was rising. Lea adjusted his hold of the raft. The girl cast a tentative glance from under her black eyelashes at his pale face and his light blue eyes gleaming like fire above his straightly drawn lips.

He pulled his cap lower to shield the eyes from the sun's glare and asked icily:

"Have you finished?"

She tossed her head without deigning to answer and looked out across the water to where the pines made a dense border outlining the lake. Lea looked at her.

"I gather from your remarks," he said slowly, "that you are contemplating a successful business career. Now, you've been in my office as stenographer twelve months. In that time, you've heard every phase of the fire insurance business discussed and threshed out over and over. Yet the other day, when a client asked you what "detached" meant—how many feet—you looked blankly over to one of the solicitors, a man who hasn't half your brains and potential ability, and waited for him to answer. The same day, a state agent asked you whether the post office in Aurora was brick or stone, and you couldn't tell him. You'd 'never noticed it.' If a man had been holding down your job at seventy-five a month, even one with—as I said—half your brains, he would have dogged the life out of me to be allowed to adjust some of the small losses we handle locally; he'd have made some excuse to tag around after me when I had to make inspections with the state agents; and he'd have filled up his talk with insurance to beat the band. But you always say

'settling losses,' when I've told you no end of times that losses are adjusted; you declined to enter the boiler room when I invited you to go with Binner and me through the new factory and when that man Congrove who has landed in jail since, was trying to work me on his loss, I saw you hiking into the other room, for you couldn't stand up to anything so disagreeable as an exchange of courtesies between a man who had burnt his house to get the insurance, and one who didn't intend to pay him for it.

"There are five shelves of insurance books on the walls of that office. I've never seen you open one. You don't notice. You're not interested.

"A couple of weeks ago, the day of that big fire, everyone in the office was crowding around to discuss ways and means. It was twelve o'clock. I wanted you to take a letter, but you deliberately finished powdering your nose and chirped, 'Why, I'm going to lunch now, but I'll hurry back.' A loss of that magnitude in the office was no more to you than a European war is to a baby in its cradle. You were sure of your seventy-five in any case.

"And that seventy-five—how do you come to be starting your successful business career on that amount? Do you think you could get that anywhere else for mechanically typing a lot of letters? Never! The day you came into my office to apply for the place, the weather was warm. There were tired circles under your very beautiful eyes, and a pathetic droop to your very pretty mouth; and when you condescended to demand—as you put it—that seventy-five, I fell for it.

"No—you'd be starting your career at ten a week anywhere else. Try it if you don't believe me.

"And 'work up!' You've been working down ever since you've been with me, so far as business is concerned. I don't say that you haven't been a delightful presence in the place, 'easy to look at,' as one of your state-agent admirers said; and I must confess that so far as I am concerned, I'd pay you a salary to stay there if you didn't do a thing. For you are as beautifully behaved as a nun. The only affinity you've formed there is for the clock. The clock and you seem to be controlled by the same springs; for on the first stroke at five P. M., you are out of your chair and clapping your machine down into your desk. I don't say, either, that you've been stingy of your time with me afterward. You've been as nice as could be to stay sometimes and talk, so long as I didn't talk about business. But if I drifted into some detail of the work that I wanted a little sympathy about, you'd immediately begin to wriggle, feel of your hair, and think it was time for you to go home. Work up! You tell that to any business man who isn't in love with you! And if he were, and you were married to him, you'd have an allowance, and every luxury that his work could give you, but an 'equal partner in his financial affairs?' Not on your life! A man wants no partner who doesn't know his business from start to finish; who wouldn't rather be on the job than eat his dinner; who wouldn't be wholly capable of carrying on the work if the man should suddenly go where fire insurance isn't supposed to be needed. He might like well enough the help, the relief, and the sympathy of a business partner, but he'd look for a man who'd be

willing to bear what he bore, shoulder what he shouldered, not a woman who would cringe at everything connected with business except cashing a check for seventy-five dollars.

"Shall I help you off the raft?" he finished politely.

"Thank you—NO!" With a face aflame and a red underlip bitten by her white teeth, the girl scrambled from the boards. As she clung for a steadying instant to the raft, looking very small and very young, the cave-man in Lea reacted in the usual way.

"Esther!" She did not look at him. "Esther, it's likely you know it without my telling you, but—I want to marry you—I love you—"

He stopped astounded, with the customary cave man stupidity, at the look she gave him before she struck out furiously for the bath house. Lea followed until he saw her in shallow water, then he turned and swam far out into the lake.

Toward evening, he packed his grip and arranged with Binner for a departure at nine o'clock by automobile. After supper, he strolled down two flights of wooden steps and around the edge of the lake to the western point of the island. Across the water the sun was just above the bluffs, and in the spreading depths lay a heaven of beauty. But Lea was blind just then to color symphonies. He was cursing himself for trying to pluck the flower of happiness with a broadaxe. No wonder his hand closed upon a nettle. Why couldn't he let the girl have her little fling of words, and then show her tenderly the injustice and unreasonableness of them? She was so young. All that talk was mere prattling of things she had heard discussed by pleasure-loving women. He wished he had bitten his tongue before—

"Mr Lea—"

The sweet voice was clear and cool, but when Lea turned quickly the girl caught her breath. She stood with her slender, white-clad feet ankle deep in the rank water-grass, her head erect, and her sunburned little hands folded against her soft yellow gown.

"Esther!"

Her look held him back. "I just wanted to say—that you were right about what you said out there in the lake—"

"Right?" Lea's face showed by its mingled hope and bewilderment that the only part of the talk his mind retained was the *faux pas* of a proposal he had made.

But Esther ignored that part. "I want to prove to you that I can become a business woman. If you will let me stay in your office another year, I will study and learn everything there is to know about fire insurance. And I'll work—I'll read every book on those shelves. I'll put on overalls if necessary and go out and inspect every building in Aurora."

As she itemized this rather heavy contract for a year's work, Lea's impulse was to catch the little hands and raise them reverently to his lips, to call himself names, beg her forgiveness, ask her to forget it all. But something in the girl's earnest eyes commanded his respectful attention. He stepped back and faced her with a look equally serious.

"Esther, if you will do that, if you will take up the work—our work—and learn to love it, learn its possibilities for joy, for romance even—and you'll find quick enough there is romance in business, just as there is beauty in mathematics—I'll be your friend, your comrade, and

you shall be my partner. I wouldn't want a better one. We'll work together. I'll put in an assistant to help handle the letters, and we'll take on some of Binner's inspections. Evenings, we'll read the books together. You shall have a voice in every movement, every investment, every decision. It will be the most ideal relation possible, except one."

He raised his hat. Stepping forward, he held out his hand with a respectful gesture.

The sun dropped suddenly behind the purpling bluffs. An equally sudden silence fell about the island. The waters of the lake received with reflective reverence the last blessing of the sinking sun. Lea, with an overwhelming rush of feeling, threw out eager arms.

"I'm going to stay over another day," he cried tensely. "If Wade can run the business into the ground in another twenty-four hours, let him. I've a right to one evening with you—but Esther, it must be as your lover, not as your partner. I want you!"

A red-headed woodpecker peeped around the young birch near which the girl stood. He cocked his head, but slipped again, modestly and stealthily, behind his tree trunk; because the thing he saw the bird could understand, possessing as his did an inconsistent, illogical little mate of his own.

The Revolution

By HORATIO WINSLOW

IF Mrs. Spreek had known what was stewing in Mr. Spreek's brain she would never have started toward the Café Espanol, Hotbed of Revolutions. But nobody in the world would have suspected honest, methodical Mr. Spreek of such a thought. During twenty peaceful years of married life, had not Mrs. Spreek remained loyal to him, and honest, and trustworthy, and good-looking? And yet, at this most critical moment (and in spite of all these things), Mr. Spreek planned, not a mere rebellion, but a Revolution with a capital R.

Washington crossed the Delaware in the middle of the night. The Spreeks were about to cross the main thoroughfare of New Orleans in the middle of the day—a far more hair-raising adventure.

"Take your hand off my sleeve; I don't need any help." (It was with these stock phrases that Mrs. Spreek always started her crossings.) "Don't try to help me. Keep your hands at home, if you please." Flurry-skurry, slapdash, she was off on the first lap of her excursion.

She got there, though incidental to her getting there the driver of a motor-truck had to put on the brakes so hard that he turned purple both as to face and vocabulary.

"Elmer!"

She poised at the near edge of the Canal Street car tracks, part way over, imperious, commanding.

Now was the time for Mr. Spreek to escape, while she hung in midstreet. Now was the moment to lose himself quietly in the crowd. For this supreme second he had been gathering his nerve all morning. It was now or never. He stepped toward the shelter of a cigar store.

"ELMER!"

He halted short. His eyes turned guiltily to hers. Lost! Like a bird drawn by the magnetic stare of a snake, Elmer maneuvered his way through the traffic till she could seize him. Then, Elmer in one hand and her umbrella in the other, Mrs. Spreek spanned the gap to the farther sidewalk in a series of short but brilliant charges. Imagine a headless hen trying to save a favorite nest-egg from a chicken-hawk and you have the picture. Nor did the inward rage which always consumed Elmer on these occasions help matters.

Two conductors suffered narrow escapes from heart failure; a boy on a motorcycle added sixteen gray hairs to his head; a man in a racing auto acquired Permanent Chills down the spine.

But the Spreeks went unscathed. Under the pilotage of Mrs. Spreek they reached the other side without so much as a broken shoestring.

"Now," said the masterful Mrs. Spreek, settling her hat, "now, we'll see what this famous Café Espanol is like, and then we'll go back to the hotel and nap till dinner."

Mr. Spreek said nothing, but in his soul he knew the days of his submission had ended. "Those revolutionists at the Café won't have anything on me," he muttered grimly. "Before she starts back to the hotel, I'm going to make a getaway or die trying."

As Mr. and Mrs. Spreek entered the Café Espanol from Bourbon Street, "Beef" Mullen leaned excitedly across the table. Indeed, he moved with so little regard for consequences that he came near overturning the pale pink drink at his elbow.

"Manny," he said to the brown-skinned personage opposite, "that big boob over there—the one coming in with the lady—gives me an idea. You say you can't get the natives on the job because of the fever. All right. Here's a scheme to get white men. Get 'em right here in New Orleans and in less'n twenty-four hours. And it won't cost us a jitney except for their keep. We'll fit up hammocks on the Lucy R. and send 'em down with our grading outfit. I'll call up Ike and get him to turn his gang loose right away and round up the suckers. Never mind how! As soon as I telephone Ike I'll be back and explain."

But General Manuel Lacarazo, President of the Santa Maria Central American Railroad Construction Co., was listening with only one ear. Many a woman is handsome at thirty-eight. Mrs. Spreek was. Many a woman follows the styles, even though she lives in as small a place as Shawness. Mrs. Spreek did. Moreover, something was happening.

Like a flash of inspiration, the vision came to Elmer of a ridiculously simple path to freedom. Before the waiter approached to take the order Elmer arose.

"Suppose you let me have some money," he whispered confidentially to Mrs. Spreek. "I just remembered that I saw a mighty interesting headline in that extra the newsboy was selling."

Mrs. Spreek extracted her black purse from her bag, unclasped it, and handed Mr. Spreek the smallest coin from its purlieus.

Curling his moustache, the general smiled ingratiatingly at the unprotected female as Elmer vanished through the door.

QUAINT are the devices of destiny. If the Spreeks had not dropped into the Café Espanol, very probably Mr. Spreek would have ended his life as a happy grass-widower in Sedalia, Mo., or Waco, Tex. Also, it is quite probable that Beef Mullen's brilliant scheme would have mouldered in the pigeon-holes of his brain, unwept, unhonored and unsprung. And without the shadow of a doubt, no twinge of desire would ever have stung General Lacarazo's breast in the memory of Mrs. Spreek's matronly beauty.

But as it was, well—

A shudder of unholy joy shook Elmer as his feet touched the sidewalk. He did not yell his ecstasy, but, to the great wonderment of certain pedestrians, he did jump into the air and clap his heels together twice before descending.

As he jarred to the earth, he became serious. He must be off or he would be captured before he started. He had taken a half-dozen steps toward Canal when his conscience pricked him. Without prelude he grabbed a passing urchin by the shoulder.

"Here's a dime," he said. "You skin over there into that restaurant, and you tell the lady that's sitting alone at the

table that her husband's been called back to the hotel. Very important! Sent an automobile after him. Tell her she's to go back to the hotel too. Remember all that?"

The boy having been sped safely on his way, Elmer continued his flight at double-quick, not feeling wholly safe till he was lost among the pedestrians that knotted Canal Street.

A detour to the nearest pawnshop left him watchless but with ten dollars for pocket money. Two doors farther down he managed to exchange his tourist clothes for a workingman's outfit, soft flannel shirt and all.

It was when Mr. Spreek emerged from the second-hand store that he came near colliding with one of those stockily-built "tough guys" who flourish so luxuriantly around fighting clubs and saloons. The latter took in Mr. Spreek from head to foot; surveyed his clothes, his big frame, and his big hands. Elmer had worked hard all the days of his life, even though the Trust had made him a hundredthousandaire.

"Hello, Mister," said the tough guy, "want a job?"

Mr. Spreek nodded. He was one of those twenty-five-hour-a-day, eight-days-a-week men. The thought of working made him tingle all over.

"It's a good job, all right, all right."

"Lead me to it," said Mr. Spreek.

"A good job, a good time and pickings," leered the tough guy.

"Pickings?"

"Surest thing ever." The tough guy came closer. "You've heard of Santa Maria, ain't you? Little republic down in Central America? Well, they got a revolution on down there and—sh-h-h! this is strickly on the q. t.—I'm working for the revolutionists, see? And they want soldiers, American soldiers, to come down there and fight. Are you on?"

Perhaps it was the awakening of some old boyhood ambition. Perhaps it was because the Revolution Idea fitted in so well with the state of Mr. Spreek's mind. Perhaps—

"You might get to be an officer," the tempter continued, "and that would be three or four hundred dollars a month gold—and pickings." He leered again.

"I'm with you," said Mr. Elmer Spreek, throwing consequences to the winds. "When can I join?"

THE Lucy R., tramp steamer of a thousand adventures, lay moored to the docks. It was nine in the morning. At ten she would slip cables for the sovereign State of Santa Maria.

Though not to outward appearance a passenger ship, on this trip the Lucy R. was plainly specializing in passengers. Bedding littered her foredeck, while an open hatchway suggested quarters below. Moreover (Exhibit B, so to speak), certain of the passengers were to be seen slouching over the rails and bunched in tobacco-burning groups.

At first sight they seemed a motley crowd, yet closer inspection showed two marks common to all. Their build and heft proved them capable of hard work, and their hands and faces proved that they had worked hard. Also, most of them were young.

"Ike" and his cohorts had done their task well. In less than ten hours the full quota of able-bodied suckers had been landed. In time the suckers would learn that they had not been enlisted to do battle, but to build railroads. They

would find themselves as footloose as leased convicts, with small, chocolate-colored Santa Marians ready to shoot holes in the rebellious. But the suckers were blissfully unaware of this. With one exception, their faces shone full of cheer and they winked merrily at one another when they passed a big up-ended wooden box labeled "Shovels."

The one exception in this light-hearted scheme was Elmer Spreek. Forty takes a more serious view of life than twenty. Also, it was Elmer's morning after, and he was thinking things over. He was trying to justify himself. It did not come easily.

It is humiliating to reflect that your wife has made you stop work and has taken charge of all the funds, and is dragging you over the tourist trails as though you were an over-grown, under-witted infant, and is helping you across every crowded street nurse-girl fashion. BUT does that justify you in running away from her like a bad little schoolboy?

Suppose you made the Hundred Thousand over to her, suppose she is well able to take care of herself, suppose in her whole life she has never called on you for help—even then are you—

At this precise moment, Mr. Spreek felt himself clapped on the back. It was a young blacksmith with whom he had talked the night before.

"Say, ain't it great the way we're kidding those port officers? Look at how the box there is marked. Shovels! Shovels your eye! That there box is full of rifles; the big guy, Mullen, was telling me so this morning. And down below we've got—"

"I'm going ashore," said Mr. Spreek with sudden determination.

"That's a joke. They won't let you off. We're going down stream in an hour."

"I'm going ashore," repeated Elmer. His chin thrust itself out as of old when he was boss of fifty men. He had made up his mind. Last night's letter was not enough. Even if life with her was impossible, he would do the frank, manly thing, and talk it over first. He hurried to the gang-plank, where Beef Mullen and a red-haired Norwegian were standing guard.

Strangely enough, at the sight of them Mr. Spreek's aggressiveness departed.

"I—I want to go ashore," he said apologetically.

"Oh, you do," said Beef Mullen, half shutting his eyes. "Well, keep on wanting, because you ain't going."

"I'm a free American citizen," began Mr. Spreek. But he was interrupted.

Beef Mullen, Vice President and Secretary of the S. M. C. A. R. R. C. Co. seemed to have lost that urbane good-nature with which he had greeted his recruits the night before. "Shut up and go for'ard," he jerked out. "Didn't you sign that paper last night? All right, then, shut up or I'll shut you up."

Elmer's mouth opened. He turned. Then, in the grip of a sudden rage, he faced about and charged. But in trying to take by force what diplomacy had failed to win, he forgot he was one against two. He charged at Beef Mullen, but that rotund shanghaier leaped cleverly to one side, allowing him to run plump into the red-haired Norwegian. They grappled, with Mr. Spreek trying none too definitely for a low hold and a throw over the right hip.

But now Mr. Beef Mullen entered the game. Taking something from his pocket, he pressed its round, cylindrical end against the Spreek abdomen.

"You go back," he growled. "You go back or I'll bore you. I got the law on my side and if I ain't you'll never live to find out. Leggo them hands and walk back and stay back. And by crock, if you raise any more row I'll get you before you can whistle."

Slowly, keeping time to the jeers of his fellow soldier of fortune, Mr. Spreek retreated. With a final command to the red-haired sailor, Beef Mullen strode into the cabin.

The cabin held one occupant, General Manuel Lacarazo, the same hardy veteran who, the day before, in the Café Espanol, had smiled ingratiatingly at Mrs. Spreek. But Time had changed him; he now had a black eye. He was staring into a small hand mirror and cursing softly.

"Now, Manny," Beef Mullen's voice was sharp, "forget it. You went up to her and tried to make a date without being introduced, and she copped you with her umbrella. I say, you had it coming to you, and you'd better stop thinking about it and get busy."

"Ha!" muttered the general, "sometime when I find that"—here he used an impolite Spanish word—"sometime when I get my hands on her, she shall see!"

"I tell you, forget it!" snapped Beef Mullen. "If I stay here and manage things from New Orleans this is our last chin together. Get wise. You're in charge of this bunch of roughnecks, and if you ain't careful you're going to have trouble. One tried to get away already. And if the suckers ever find out what they're in for—"

He stopped as General Lacarazo put a warning hand over his mouth.

"Sh-h-h-h!" the general said.

It was a woman's voice. She was expostulating with the man at the gangplank.

"My husband *is* here and I'm *going* to see him."

"*Dios!*" whispered General Lacarazo. "She is the woman. Bring her in." His fists knotted, while his cheeks burned a dusky red. "Bring her in."

Beef Mullen gasped with disgust. "For Gawd's sake, Manny, forget it. Keep her out. We ain't in Santa Maria; we're in the U. S. A. Leave her be."

General Manuel Lacarazo was on his feet, breathing hard with every ounce of the devil in him rampant. "Mullen, this is my business—mine. Tell that man to bring her in."

"She says she's got a husband aboard," objected Beef Mullen less vigorously.

"So!" said the general. "Well, *amigo mio,* when we drop the hook in Santa Maria her husband will not be aboard. But," he smiled viciously, "a ship's patron, she will be aboard. Tell the man to bring her in. She must not hear my voice."

Beef Mullen hesitated a moment. Then he turned to the open doorway.

"All right, Manny, just as you say. Olaf, it's all right. Let her come in here."

WITH a sudden start Elmer Spreek left the offshore rail, where he had marooned himself after his luckless encounter with Mullen's revolver. Yes, it was her voice! Shame overwhelmed him at the thought. She had come to get him.

She had come to get him!

A minute before he had wished nothing more than release from the ship; now he knew he would not leave the

Lucy R. unless he were thrown overboard. She, the persuasive, dominant female, had followed him to drag him once more at her heels. Bitterly he berated himself for sending that last night's letter, in which he had not only told her of his going, but had revealed the route. If she managed to release him after he had failed to release himself, he would be doomed to the end of his days to follow her leading, like an overgrown, underminded infant.

She was going into the cabin now. Well, she would never find him. He would burrow as deep as he could get. He would hide in the coal bunkers. Crouching warily till she had passed out of sight, he made for the hatchway.

In his nervous desire for haste, he tumbled as his feet fumbled for the iron rungs. He missed the first, slipping to the waist. Suddenly, in the very midst of his scrambling, he froze stock still. He stared blankly. The thing was incredible.

It was a scream he heard, a woman's scream—the frightened cry of the woman who was his wife.

She was afraid! *Her* voice was raised in terror! Impossible!

Again it came, and louder.

"Hel-l-lp! Elmer, help me!"

She was calling on him to help her. She wanted his help. The idea was paralyzing in its novelty. For a fraction of a second, unable to move, he clung to the hatchway, watching the apathetic postures of the men on deck.

"Hel-lp! Elm—"

But before the word was finished, Elmer's legs were moving like those of a galvanized frog. Now he was up, running across the deck, pushing aside those who blocked his path. At the door of the cabin stood Beef Mullen, pale over the anticipation of trouble. Incidentally, also, Beef Mullen was accompanied by his revolver.

But, revolvers or gatling guns, there was no more holding back for Elmer.

Beef Mullen did not have time to shoot. With every strong-ribbed muscle lending obedience, Mr. Spreek caught the revolver in both hands, while his right knee went so hard against Mr. Mullen's southerly suburb that the Vice President and Secretary of the S. M. C. A. R. R. C. Co. collapsed alongside the cabin. As for the revolver, that plunked down into the water between boat and dock.

Came now the red-haired Norse with his large, hairy fist. But Mr. Spreek unloosed a wild swing with a large, hairy fist of his own at the far end. Mr. Spreek got there first, and Olaf, tasting the knuckles, tumbled. Very likely he would have risen and mixed matters again, for only rarely does the uneducated punch score a knockout, but it chanced that the back of Olaf's head had come in contact with an iron cleat. So he remained in a reposeful position while Mr. Spreek broke through into the cabin.

The general and Mrs. Spreek were still there; the general testifying his affection by contracting his fingers in such a way as to choke off Mrs. Spreek's air supply. Owing to her valiant struggle, the choking had just begun. But Elmer did not know this.

He commenced hurriedly but methodically, with no waste motion, as an efficiency man should, by jolting the general so hard that the hero of a hundred revolutions was forced to unlock his fingers to save himself.

"Yuh tin soldier!" grunted Mr. Spreek as his wife collapsed in his arms.

The general fumbled at a hip pocket. Dropping his wife across a chair, Mr. Spreek sprang for the gun. He did not get there in time to stave off the first shot, but he was quite in time to manhandle the shooting arm. As a result, the bullet flew out an open porthole, thudding hard into the big box labeled "Shovels" which, being nicely balanced, toppled over and burst wide open, revealing the fact that the contents were not rifles, but merely those humble tools advertised on the cover—in a word—Shovels. As the significance of the shovel deception dawned on the soldiers of fortune, symptoms of a riot became evident. But Mr. Spreek was too busy rioting on his own hook to consider any minor disturbances.

"Whatcha—thinkya—gonna — do — now?" he panted as he struggled with the general's fighting arm. Mr. Spreek had never studied wrestling, but his hold was a masterpiece. Either the hold or the general's arm had to be broken. It was not the hold. And straightway the general ceased having a desire to shoot anybody. Nor would such a desire have done him any good, for Elmer was now fondling the gun.

But as Elmer reached for the half-fainting Mrs. Spreek, reinforcements rushed up in the shape of two small uniformed persons of the color of tan automobiles. Evidently they had been sleeping, for they were disheveled and awkwardly armed—one with a large rifle and the other with a small knife.

By this time, however, the Joy of Battle was not coursing through Mr. Spreek's veins. In its stead was the twenty-five-hour-day, eight-days-a-week spirit. He did not want to leave the job unfinished.

Inarticulately the general urged his bodyguard to combat.

"Come on," seconded Elmer, "and bring along your friends."

He tried the automatic, but a failure to press some secret spring negatived his trigger pull. So he hurled the revolver at the rifleman, thereby somewhat discouraging that warrior, and reached down for a chair to hurl at the knife-man. Unfortunately, though, the chairs on a tramp steamer were of the screwed-down variety.

Therefore, being a handy sort at makeshifts, Mr. Spreek closed briskly on the knife-man, receiving nothing worse than a thrust that mortally ripped his left coat sleeve. Then, using this individual as a missile, he cast him across the cabin at the rifle-man, who, collapsing in turn, engulfed the general. All three now lay in a confused and cursing heap.

"Now," thundered Mr. Spreek, turning to his wife, "now you come along with me—and hurry about it, too!"

Mrs. Spreek obediently tagged after him as he trotted down the gangplank unmolested. Nor did they turn their heads to see the battle on deck with Beef Mullen, the captain, two mates and a handful of sailors, pitting themselves half-heartedly against one hundred and fifty furious soldiers of fortune.

Mrs. Spreek's cab had departed, so the pair walked hastily from the water front, escaping unchallenged the solitary policeman.

Not till they had passed a half dozen squares and stood at the edge of a quiet, untrafficked street did Elmer look around bewildered, at a sound he had never heard before. Mrs. Spreek was sobbing; actually sobbing.

"Elmer," she said, "when I got your letter I—I just had to come and tell you how wrong I'd been. I didn't mean to hurt you, Elmer, but, don't you see, you're the only child I've ever had, and until you sold your factory four months ago I never really had you. It was the first time I'd had a chance to mother anybody." She looked up at him through her tears. "P-please help me across the street, Elmer."

But Mr. Spreek's face was suddenly lighted with the joy of understanding.

"Say," he said, "haven't we been idiots, though? There's lots of room at home—too much! And right now, before I change my clothes, we're going to look up the nearest orphan asylum."

This is the time of year when a man can put on $168 worth of clothes and go out and get pneumonia from exposure, and a girl can go out wearing a sash curtain and a smile and come home with hives and prickly heat.

After reading the epitaphs on the tombstones in a graveyard a man always wonders where they put the wicked people when they die.

A girl gets so tired of washing dishes that she hurries up and gets married. And then she has to wash dishes and babies too.

The old-fashioned woman who used to say her prayers night and morning now has a daughter who knocks on wood.

You may have noticed that a baldheaded man never has any trouble growing a fine crop of hair in his ears.

When a woman builds air castles she sees to it that there is a big wide closet in every room.

An old house looks better with a fresh coat of paint, but it is different with an old woman.

You can get used to anything, even water.

A sea lion isn't the sloppiest thing in the world. It is a girl who is trying to cry and chew gum at the same time.

Before marriage a man can hold a 150-pound girl on his knee for four hours and not get tired. After marriage it exhausts him to hold a 10-pound baby on his knee for four minutes. —*Luke McLuke*

Jute Bags

By E. O. JAMES

ILKERSEN, alias Cooper, knew he was done for before he fairly reached Marsh's Station. There was no round-about way, no friendly mask of trees; in the condemning glare of mid-afternoon he had to count ties to the very station platform. It was only a one-cow town, but he could not pretend to despise it. The place had his number before it began. It was all business, from stock-pen to lumber yard. The freight platform was crowded with tractor plows newly set off; a car of crude oil was emptying at the tank. He limped to the nearer warehouse, where a gang was loading a car with baled hay, but the foreman hardly waited for his question.

"Nothing doing, bo."

At the second warehouse, where they were unloading cement, the men did not even pause to look at him; and the man at the oil tank said: "The boss does all the hiring."

"Who's he?"

"Marsh." The man pointed to the sign over the warehouse door: "Marsh's No. 2."

"One-man town, eh?" asked Wilkersen.

"He's big enough, partner," countered the oil man.

A one-man town it was, coming and going, lumber and grain, smithy and implements, big white house and general store. Wilkersen flared with helpless resentment that one man should have so much and manage it so well, while he—Four jobs lost in three weeks—for good and sufficient reasons. The din and dust in the cement factory at North Vallejo had bewildered him till he couldn't work. Why, he asked himself, did God put a man in a universe of flying wheels and belts and cogs, cogs that get your nerve no matter how you try to keep a grip on yourself. He knew he oughtn't to have hired as a teamster on the highway construction gang up the Napa road.

"Bookkeeper, ye say!" The boss's caustic tongue had seized him up. "Ye handle yer mules just like some—some damned expert accountant. No plain bookkeeper could ball things up that bad. Now get t'hell out o' here, you—you refined private secretary!" And Wilkersen had gone—beaten. You don't answer back when a man with fists and a tongue tells you the truth about yourself.

He could have made good as timekeeper on the aqueduct—he was sure of that—if that thug-faced Conlin, on the pick and shovel shift, hadn't called him Wilkersen, with the superintendent standing by. And at the docks at Port Costa he simply couldn't keep the pace.

At the store he bought a little food (the fruit hunger was still keen in him) and went to eat it on the shaded side porch. But a bale of new grain sacks lay there. Wilkersen felt a qualm of nausea at the sight of them, and moved, sore-footed, to the eucalyptus shade, up the sidewalk, nearer the little office.

Damn the things: He never wanted to see jute bags again. Here he was slipping, falling down on every chance, his nerve clean gone.

He was still munching his thin meal when a young mechanic drove a car from the garage across the way, bringing it around near where he was sitting. The office screen door opened, and a square-set, middle aged man came down the steps. The garage boy got out, the iron-gray man took the driver's seat, glanced back at the big white house and tooted a signal. Then, waiting, he became aware of Wilkersen and stared at him a moment.

"Want work?"

"Why, yes—I—"

"Threshing gang?"

"Anything."

"Anything. That means you're a clerk, eh? Been in the hospital, haven't you?"

"Yes—a little while back," Wilkersen gulped. "But I'm all right. I—"

"It's a man's job, bucking wheat sacks. What's your name?"

"Why, Cooper," Wilkersen lied.

"Well, Cooper, if you've got the backbone, the job's two and four bits and found. I'm going to the machine now."

Wilkersen wasn't fit, and he knew he wasn't Marsh's kind. That stolid mask of a face, niggard speech that somehow hit off your pet weakness and made you give yourself away—he might expect no sympathy here. He knew now why the village was all painted and square-fenced and busy; it was just an image of Marsh: cool, no sympathy; inexorable system. It made him think, somehow, of a broad mahogany desk, then a quiet, inexorable voice: *"It is the judgment of this court that you....."*

No, the chance wasn't fair, but when you have spent your last quarter there is no choice. He started toward the car.

"Wait a minute." Marsh ran the car alongside the store porch. "We'll take these on." He pointed to the bale of jute bags. "Behind there. Well, heave 'em in. They won't hurt you. The state made 'em," he chuckled grimly.

Wilkersen heaved them in and started to sit by Marsh.

"Behind, if you will. There's another passenger."

A slip of a girl, nine or ten maybe, came running down the walk from the big white house. She climbed in by the big square-shouldered man, all quivering eagerness, but without a word.

"Afraid to talk to him, the big stiff," thought Wilkersen, edging away from the hated bale. "Can't he even smile at the youngster?"

Twenty minutes later he was delivered over to Oleson, threshing foreman, and the fifth round in his unequal fight began.

It was a stationary separator. Oleson put him by the grain spout, in the thickest of the choking chaff. Above him the weighing hopper filled, tripped automatically and emptied, and the wheat came pouring down into the sack. Fill — trip—empty—fill—trip—empty— and the sack was full. He must fix another to the frame, while Oleson's boy, a lad of fifteen, deftly sewed the mouth of the full sack. Then Wilkersen wrestled the load to its place on the wagon and corded the sacks in long, high ranks.

There was no use trying to bluff it off; he was afraid of the belts and wheels. The drum and roar of the agitator and

fans, the high-keyed song of the cylinder drawing in the broken sheaves, might be music to the rest of the gang; the noise only made Wilkersen helpless. When there was a break-down he fumbled in the tool box and kept bringing the wrong thing. Trying awkwardly to help oil, he got all but caught in the cylinder pulley when the machine started suddenly.

In the mess-wagon the gang had their fun with him.

"You what's-yer-name—Cooper ain't it? Anyway, you new bird, ye see old Spud, there." They pointed to the cook's one-armed helper. "He tried your stunt, oiling the cylinder with a left-handed oilcan two years ago. Didn't ye, Spud? Let's see, Spud, how long was you in the county hospital that time?"

Wilkersen gazed at Spud's stumped arm in silent horror.

"That's what happens," went on another of the gang, "when you bindlestiffs who've been bookkeepers and clerks and all that try a man's job."

"Aw, let up on this 'ere Hooper. He'll soon be on his way. Three days is the limit for all of 'em."

And Wilkersen grinned and tried to be a mixer, but couldn't.

"How *did* Spud lose his arm?" he asked young Oleson after they left the mess-wagon.

"How? In the cylinder, like ye heard 'em say. They wasn't joshin' about that. Y' oughta seen it—just shredded like hamburger when the butcher puts it through. Gosh!" And the boy went proudly into the details regarding Spud.

Each afternoon Marsh would drive out to the machine. Wilkersen would look up through the blinding sweat and the dust, and see him sitting there, a little way off, with the small girl by his side, looking hard at everything.

"The boss don't get very close to the separator," he shouted in young Oleson's ear.

"Don't you worry. What the boss don't see!" said the boy. "Ye got t' d'liver the goods to *him*."

On the third afternoon, even as his tormentors had predicted, his finish came. The relief wagon had been late and Wilkersen was getting behind again. His legs were tottery; he couldn't somehow get the right grip on the sacks. Struggling with his load, he weaved against the corner of the wagon; the taut cloth of the bag rasped against something, ripped and collapsed on his shoulder, loosing a cascade of wheat over his body.

He knew this for his exit cue. The hoarse laugh from the men, and Oleson's cursing made no deep impression on him. He was all in. He turned aimlessly away, still clutching the torn bag in his shaking hand; and there sat Marsh, stolid, unmoved, symbol of all that was prosperous and hateful in the system of things. He would have liked to slug Marsh where he sat, to damn him to his face. And then he saw Marsh beckon to him.

He slouched over to the car.

"Emily," the big man said gently, "I believe Mrs. Oleson has some brooder ducks over there in the apricot orchard. If you'd ask her, perhaps she might let—"

The little girl beamed with delight at the big man and hurried off. Wilkersen felt a savage satisfaction at this. If Marsh started anything?

"Well?" he demanded.

"Well?" Marsh eyed him steadily.

"You saw my finish. Didn't have the backbone, did I? You're satisfied now, aren't you?"

"Are you?" Marsh's cool tone was maddening.

"Yes! Damned good and well satisfied! I'm through—through with playing the game your way. You and your kind have laid down the rules long enough. I'm going to play the game according to my own rules now.

"I've spoiled a perfectly good jute bag for you. Cost you how much? Ten cents? Ten and a quarter? Well, I ruined it. Had a right to. D'ye know why? I'll tell you. I made it. Do you get me? I—I humped over a loom over there in San Quentin and wove it—it and about a million others. Now do you get me? Just a common low-down, felon-branded, prison-stamped ex-con.! Wilkersen's my right name, not that it would make any difference to you. You never read about me. Just a cheap little piker of a felon, not interesting enough for even a front page paragraph. Oh, bad enough to draw my seven years, of course, so that other sixty-dollar accountants would be more careful to avoid petty discrepancies!"

"And of course you didn't deserve it?"

"Oh, you needn't sneer at me, curse you. I'm not saying I oughtn't to have done time."

"I'm not sneering. I merely ask you."

"Well, I never played the baby act. They say—the professionals said I was a bungler and a piker. And it wouldn't do any good now to talk about the real-estate sharps I worked for, nor the half-million they made out of rotten subdivisions and eucalyptus fakes. No, I thought it over and decided to do my penance. I wanted to wipe the slate clean.

"Well, I got out four weeks ago, and went back home. Guess what I got. Ex-convicts as an abstract proposition and at a distance—oh, they constitute a *cause*—something to devote a special Sunday service to. I was just an unpleasant fact.

"And for four weeks I've been trying to get on my feet. Changed my name, as if that would help any. And I know it now; the oldtimers were right when they said the odds are a thousand to one against a man. If a man's got money or friends, he can get a fresh start. If he hasn't, he'd better use his wits, go into the game crooked, and play for a big stake."

"And suppose the odds are twice ten thousand to one against you?" Marsh's voice was hard as steel.

"My God, man. It looks easy to you, doesn't it? You with your ranches and store, and money coming in a hundred ways, and sixty men on your payroll. Grabb'd a township from the government years ago, probably—or how *did* you get it, anyway?"

"I bought it. I paid the owners their price."

"Inherited a pile then, I bet."

"Twelve years ago I had less than you will have when I pay you your wages."

"Easy, chaplain," sneered Wilkersen. "I see your hand. You're going to preach a nice little platitudinous sermon about self-made men, and all that rot. I tell you again, from your side of the wall it looks easy. They say you're a great manager, that you made the town out of nothing, that if it hadn't been for you the ditch would never have gone through the valley here. Oh, I've a

certain respect for you for all that. I'm no half-baked Bolshevist; had a little too much economic sense to go nutty that way. But here you are with the game playing right into your hands. And here I am, four weeks out of San Quentin, discredited forever at my own line of work, and not fit for—for bucking wheat sacks. D'ye know what the prison does for a man? Never visited the prison, I daresay. Even if you had, you wouldn't have really seen.

"They come in, once in a while, a party of visitors like a damned sight-seers' excursion, and file through the prison in forty-five minutes. They say, 'Poor fellows, aint it nice they have a vaudeville show and turkey at Christmas?' 'I suppose,' says another, 'I suppose some of 'em are really not such bad men at heart.' And they say they have some last year's magazines at home they'll send to the reading room. And then they beat it—and they've seen the prison!"

He dropped the torn bag, and Marsh moved his feet slightly, but never took his eyes from the other's face.

"They strip you naked before men," Wilkersen went on in a heart-sick monotone. "They measure your body and set down the figures, for statistics, for penologists to study, and for the detectives to keep on file. And while they're doing it some guard brings a string of visitors through the Bertillon room, and they look at you; and you think you'll get used to being looked at after awhile, but you never do. There were times in my last month when I prayed men might be struck dead for looking at me that way.

"And then they march you with a Mexican and a thug and a thing whose crime you won't name, down to the old cell-house. But there—I'm not talking about cells, nor the things a decent man misses, nor the thing your flesh creeps to touch. A man can bear that as part of the penance.

"They take you down to the jute mill, and on every side the men eye you, and some of 'em grin. They march you away down to the far end and set you to opening bales of raw jute with a long row of gray devils like yourself; only some of 'em are second timers and don't care. And some of 'em will never do anything else; they're afraid to trust 'em among the machines. There were times I wished I could have stayed there, opening bales.

"But they moved me up to the spinning jenneys and—maybe you've noticed some men never can understand machinery. I never could get the hang of it. And sir, I just got all mixed and dippy. There was that long line of spools. They'd shut the belt off and the machine would stop for a minute, and you'd hurry to put in the empties. And then, all at once, the whole line of 'em would start to whirl and dance. And you'd get dizzy watching, and try to look at something else and—and you couldn't keep your eyes off 'em whirling that way. Every way you turned, there were the whirling spools, and the noise boring into your head like a dentist's drill. I —I couldn't get 'em out of my head."

"I've an idea a good many boys in the trenches last year faced worse noise," observed Marsh drily. "Aren't you given to feeling a little too sorry for yourself?"

"Oh, I know." Wilkersen's voice was less angry now. "I thought of that, too, last year. I tried to brace up. But I

couldn't get 'em out of my head. All night in my sleep I'd see the little spools whizzing and the bigger ones above 'em jerking, and the faces of the fellows through the flying lint, watching hard to see there wasn't a tangle or a break. I used to wake up nights running my hand over the bottom of the bunk above me, feeling for breaks and trying to mend 'em. If the machinery could only have stopped once in a while; but it didn't. There were the big power shafts whirling away forever, and the air full of belts, and you didn't dare turn around quick for fear of getting caught. They hadn't attached the safety guards when I first went in. It was hell—just plain hell, belted and cogged and whirling—to a man that doesn't understand machinery.

"There was a lad working along side me—just a boy—couldn't have been more than twenty or twenty-one; down from the mountains, up Siskiyou way somewhere. I remember the first Sunday in the yard we were looking up at Mt. Tamalpais and he was wondering if there was deer hunting up there. Well, he was all rattled, just as I was and he—he got his arm caught—the forearm—right in the cogs—and it—"

Wilkersen brushed his left forearm across his eyes.

"It got the last shred of nerve I had left. After that, I'd go down to the mill of a morning with cold feet, simply scared out. I tried. I wanted to play the game just as all the other fellows had to play it, but I never did get on. And of course, I balled everything up. They tried me at the loom. I'd go down of a morning saying: 'You've got to keep cool. No breaks or tangles today.' And pretty soon I'd get to counting my yards and worrying lest I wouldn't get my stint done, and then I'd try to speed her up a little. Then the jute would go rotten, or the loom would get to bucking, and my fingers would get all shaky trying to tie the breaks fast enough. And I'd sit there swearing under my breath and talking to myself. Clack, clack would go the bobbins—and the noise like a rusty saw across your nerves.

"The fifth month I got no letter. It was three months later I learned my wife had decided to take her divorce."

"I should think you'd have learned by that time that you had to depend upon yourself."

"Oh, I learned, I learned. Of course I got to thinking too much, and one day I lost my head and gave the civilian foreman a cussing-out. When the guards came I grabbed up a bobbin frame and fought crazy mad till they had to knock me out cold to get me to the dungeon. It was the solitary for me, and all my credits gone, desperate character! And I'd taught a Sunday School class at home, and stood for the bullying of every smart alec salesman in the office.

"Of course, after that there was no going up out of the mill. Others went up to the offices and the soft places. And I stayed on and wove patterns of hate and damnation into every yard of the stuff, till the very smell of it—bah!" He picked up the bag again and rolled it disgustedly in his hand.

"You try to think it's all a horrible mistake, a bad dream. And then after three or four years you know you'll never wake up from it. Some men can save themselves. I used to plan how I'd try to get a little ranch away off

down the San Joaquin somewhere, about a thousand miles away from town and noise, everything so still you could hear the water slipping along in the ditch at the end of the alfalfa patch. But I guess I'm done for. You see that light streak there," he turned the bag over in his hand, "below where the tear is? No wonder it ripped; there was a defect in the cloth, something yellow just like me; and the poor devil that wove it got a black mark for it. His loom's going badly and he—"

Marsh put out his big hand and took the sack, his heavy forefinger following the yellow line.

"Wait a minute," he said, "let me tell it. His loom's going badly, just as you say, and the jute keeps breaking, and maybe the bobbin catches; but he—he won't let men, nor the system of things, nor the awful mistake of his youth, nor —nor God himself ruin his life. And so he reaches up and takes down the tie-cuts from on top, and ties the breaks, and—"

"In God's name, Mr. Marsh! You mean that *you*—"

Marsh's face was like gray ashes and his voice shook. "Fourteen years. 'Neither found he any to comfort him'—none but Emily's mother. And so I—I took the world in my two hands and just made a part of it over."

He tossed the torn sack to the ground, and a grim smile showed on his gray-stubbled face. "It's the first one I've touched in years. But I'm thinking there's many a good man up and down the state has a sort of—well, you might say an *intimate* feeling when he sees one of them.

"And now, Wilkersen, if you're ready, we'll call Emily and be starting back to town. There are a number of things I want to talk over with you."

"Who is the public?" frantically inquires a correspondent of the World. The public is that section of society whose crest is a goat rampant, but futile. —*New York Telegraph*

Well, let winter come on. The girls have their ears banked ready for it. —*Minneapolis Tribune*

Speaking of those magazine publishers who are getting out editions by typewriter it might be remarked that to them goes the, so to speak, blue ribbon for initiative. —*New York Globe*

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Processional

By RAMSEY BENSON

OT in the ecclesiastical sense, understand. Ecclesiastically the Processional is where the choirboys come in and march up the aisle singing, but the term as it related to the Midgeleys signified something quite different.

Midgeley was a department official. That is to say, he was no mere clerk. Washington swarmed with clerks. You would hear that there were upwards of 50,000 of them in Uncle Sam's service and you could believe as much if you happened to be in the street when the hour of four struck and they came pouring out of the various government buildings. Officials, on the other hand, were not nearly so common. Their number ran well up into the hundreds, no doubt, but relatively speaking they were few and distinguished. Socially (here is the point to bear in mind) a very considerable gulf yawned between an official and a clerk, similar in kind to the gulf between a Senator and a Member of Congress. Whoever has been in Washington knows that a Member of Congress is socially nowhere in comparison with a Senator.

Midgeley's salary was $2,500 a year, with prospects. The clerk who drew as much as $1,800 was at the very top of his class. The margin meant something in the social splash.

Needless to say Midgeley was married. Otherwise he might not have cared so much about the social splash. And to make him care still more, his children were two girls, ten and twelve years old. Yet a little while and what would not the social splash mean to the Midgeleys?

Mrs. Midgeley had been born under the shadow of the Capitol, but Midgeley was originally from the provinces. By that circumstance their points of view differed somewhat. Mrs. Midgeley's interest in the provinces was a matter of curiosity only slightly tinged with respect. Now and then some person from the old home town would drop in to shake hands with Midgeley and be invited to dine with the family. Oftenest it would be a crony of former days, gawky and countrified in Mrs. Midgeley's eyes, but once it was a crony's daughter, just married, with her husband, and they were curiosities indeed. Mrs. Midgeley found them vastly amusing, though of course she was too well bred to laugh at them openly, and vowed she was as sorry to have them go as she pretended to be.

"I should think they'd simply loathe their little old village after seeing Washington!" she sighed, compassionately.

Midgeley saw the situation somewhat otherwise. At times he thought with genuine longing of the little old village, but he kept his longing a secret. When his wife laughed at the provincial bride and groom, he affected to laugh with her.

The feeling for the scenes of his early days never tugged harder at his heartstrings than it did the day he glanced up from his papers and beheld

Tom Miller's jolly face in the doorway. Tom Miller had been his most particular crony and he wasn't changed a bit, or scarcely a bit, jolly of face as ever, and loud of voice, and big of figure. Midgeley sprang up and caught his hand and was ready to shed tears, so powerfully did the feeling tug. Nor did he lose any time calling up his wife to tell her Tom would dine with them—Tom Miller, the best fellow in the world. The wire worked badly and Mrs. Midgeley didn't get it all, but she had a dinner ready in good time. Tom Miller complimented her fulsomely on the dinner. He overflowed with compliments, in fact, and showered them on everything and everybody, from the electric heater to the little girls in their fluffy frocks.

"You are of southern descent, I daresay, Mr. Miller," remarked Mrs. Midgeley, warming visibly.

"No, ma'am—Yankee," replied Tom, humbly.

"Dear me!" protested Mrs. Midgeley, so significantly that they all laughed.

The little village, Tom let it be known, was grown to be quite a town, and he was its postmaster. His salary was $1,900 a year. He was not too full of compliments for his hosts to forget to air his own fortunes. Indeed he spoke of these at some length, and in rather a boastful vein, though so boyishly frank that you couldn't be offended—of his five healthy children, his orchard, his ten-room house with the wide, screened porch all the way around, his big grassy lawn, and last but not least his barn, with a horse and a cow in it.

"A cow!" faltered Mrs. Midgeley.

"Real milk, you know!" exclaimed Midgeley.

"Of course it costs a lot," Tom confessed guiltily. "It eats up the odd $900, most years, but a thousand a year to go into the bank or permanent improvements—it's not so bad, eh?"

Midgeley gasped for breath. Mrs. Midgeley had all the air of a grown-up person listening to a fairy story.

"It ought to be more," Tom went on to say. "You know it was never in me to save. I expect I shouldn't lay up a cent if it wasn't for Mrs. Miller."

Speaking of Mrs. Miller he was reminded of something. "She will ask me more than a million questions when I get home. If you don't object I should like to be able to tell her what your flat is like," he ventured.

"Certainly—oh, certainly!" assented Midgeley, with a cordiality that did not entirely conceal his uneasiness.

He put his best foot forward; that is, he showed Miller the bathroom first. It was really a classy bathroom, a dream of clean tiles and enamel and nickel.

"Cricky!" cried Tom. "This sure beats a washtub and warming the water in a teakettle."

The flat had two rooms facing the street, with a balcony. Midgeley thought they had never seemed so painfully little; the balcony, especially, barely afforded room for the two of them. But Tom was generous.

"Snug as a bug in a rug!" he commented.

The worst was the bedrooms—not a window in either of them, and no light till you switched on the electricity. They were very little, too.

"Dainty!" glowed Tom. He called the kitchen dainty, as well. It was about as large as an ordinary cupboard.

They sat down by the little coal grate to talk. "Dainty," repeated Tom, "and

sensible. You were always thriftier than I. I bet you lay up $1,500 a year—probably more."

Midgeley laughed. With his thumb and forefinger he formed the semblance of a cypher. "That's what I lay up," said he.

"What?"

"Not a red!"

"Out of $2,500."

"Out of $2,500. My salary is barely enough to keep our heads above water."

Miller was thunderstruck. "But the rainy day, you know—"

"I suppose we figure there won't be any rainy day, in the classified service. A fellow doesn't lose his job there."

Tom looked about him in bewilderment. "What— Where does all the money go to?"

Midgeley took a card and wrote his home address on it. "Do you see those letters after the name of the street?"

"Sure—N. W."

"Precisely—N. W. Because they are N. W. our rent is $75 a month. If they were N. E. we should be living in larger rooms and paying about $25 a month."

Tom stared incredulously.

"And that's only the beginning," discoursed Midgeley, warming to his recital. "Furniture that would answer very well over beyond the Capitol would never do here. And clothes—the scale of living generally! It costs something, old man, to have your being within pistol-shot of Dupont Circle."

"Well, what do you live here for?" demanded Tom.

Once more Midgeley laughed. And having laughed he glanced over his shoulder at Mrs. Midgeley and the girls, who were sitting a little apart, but he said nothing.

Miller gazed thoughtfully at the glowing coals. "I want to ask you one more question," said he, after a moment.

"Fire away!" said Midgeley.

"It's this: how about old age?"

"Well, I hope to be promoted; I believe I'm not unreasonable in counting on promotion. My salary will be $3,000 one of these days. Some day it may be $5,000. The chief of my division gets that."

"When you get $3,000, shall you save $500?"

Midgeley shrugged his shoulders. "God knows!"

"Don't you?"

"Frankly, yes. If my salary were $10,000, or $25,000, or $50,000, no matter what—I shouldn't lay up anything."

The conversation was growing too serious for the occasion and by mutual consent it switched to lighter reminiscences. With much laughter the two men lived over the days of long ago—such laughter that Mrs. Midgeley and the girls were drawn into it and voted their guest pleasant company even though he were from the provinces.

Tom stayed several days in Washington and the friends were often together. Once, as they walked along the street, a magnificent car drew up at the curb near them and a footman in livery sprang down from the front seat to open the door for a half-grown girl, who stepped out with the airs of an empress.

"That," remarked Midgeley, "is what we mean by the advantages that wealth can bestow."

Miller burst out laughing. "I heard a story about Roosevelt the other day," he said. "When Roosevelt went to live in the White House the darkey servants were under orders to open the doors for

any member of the royal family. Teddy watched them open doors for his kids a time or two and then the darkeys got new orders. 'If you choose to open the doors for Mrs. Roosevelt,' says Teddy, 'I'll appreciate it as a courtesy, but I guess you'd better let me and the boys open our own doors.'"

"Showing," remarked Midgeley, "that Roosevelt, being new to Washington, didn't know advantages when he saw them."

He laughed, too, but not altogether mirthfully.

The swarm of clerks is not the only peculiar thing about Washington at four o'clock in the afternoon. Another is the loud slamming of cab doors which shortly begins to be heard, a token that the social whirl is under way. Nowhere in the world, perhaps, can so many cab doors be heard to slam as in Washington between the hours of four and five. Nor are those who ride in cabs by any means all, thousands go on foot in their company clothes.

The Midgeleys went on foot for the most part. About every afternoon Midgeley would come home to find his wife already dressed for society and his own frock coat and gray trousers laid out ready for him to put on. That was the established order of things.

Mrs. Midgeley was not studious of her husband's moods. She was long used to having him asquiesce in her social arrangements. And if a new order impended, its premonitions were not obtrusive. Mrs. Midgeley forboded nothing. The departments closed as usual that day and Midgeley as usual came home. The frock coat was laid out for him, and the gray trousers, and the pearl gloves, and the silk hat. Mrs. Midgeley, in her trimly tailored gown, was waiting.

"It is late, Merton; you will need to hurry," she remarked, as her husband entered.

Midgeley cast himself down in a chair, "Where are the girls?" he asked.

"With their auntie," Mrs. Midgeley replied. "Have you forgotten that Mrs. Calthorp receives this afternoon."

"Hang Mrs. Calthorp!"

"Merton!"

The man's manner was wholly devoid of temper, without a trace of sulks, and none the less disconcerting for that. Mrs. Midgeley was certainly disconcerted.

And the end was not yet. "Have I ever been a brute, Mabel?" asked Midgeley.

She did not answer.

"Have I?" he persisted.

So pressed she found tongue to say, mechanically, that he had not.

"Well, I'm going to be a brute now, for about half an hour. I estimate that half an hour of it will be enough, though that will depend a good deal on circumstances."

She stared at him with wide eyes.

"Take off your hat, Mabel," he commanded her. "You look ridiculous, and very uncomfortable."

"Do you mean that we are not going to Mrs. Calthorp's to-day?"

"I do. Not to-day—nor any other day. We're done with with Mrs. Calthrop and all her tribe."

Mrs. Midgeley paled.

"Oh, I can be a brute when it's necessary," quoth Midgeley, almost airily.

"Is it necessary?"

"Most assuredly. Our home is spoiling for the want of a brute to set it to

rights. A real, ruthless brute—and I'm it."

Mrs. Midgeley stood up, aimlessly, dazedly. She took off her hat, and when she sat down again, sank down, rather, as with a weakness of the knees, it was in the very midst of her husband's company apparel.

"Very good," said Midgeley. "We'll get right down to brass tacks. Brass Tack No. 1: When a man and his wife and their two young children spend $2,500 a year just to live, they are absurd. Brass Tack No. 2: When that $2,500 is their whole income, all they can rake and scrape, they are wicked. Brass Tack No. 3: When they get nothing better for their money than the privilege of sleeping in seven by nine bedrooms where the light of day never enters, words fail to do them justice."

"Bedrooms are not all of life," Mrs. Midgeley managed to retort, feebly.

"You are right. We have furthermore the privilege of writing N. W. after the name of our street."

"Such things mean much to a woman."

"Too much. About a thousand times too much. Women's notions need to be amended and that's where a brute can make himself useful."

Mrs. Midgeley's eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, I knew you would cry," said Midgeley. "If I wasn't a brute I'd give up right now and say no more. That shows how necessary it is for me to be a brute until we get settled. There's no time to lose either. The N. W. quarter of Washington is no place for growing girls on $2,500 a year. It's high time Mildred and Millicent were hustled out of here, into some better atmosphere."

"Better!"

"That's what I say."

"Of course there's none better anywhere."

"For those who have the price. For those who haven't it spells ruin. How can we be sure our girls will marry rich men, and if they don't marry rich men how can the ideals we are bringing them up to help but make them miserable all their lives?"

Mrs. Midgeley's fine eyes flashed, and Midgeley held up a warning hand.

"Don't, Mabel! It won't do a bit of good. I am just brute enough to have my own way. The trouble with us is the trouble with about everybody in this gay capital; we've picked the wrong procession to keep up with. I suppose we've got to be in a procession—that's human nature; but I do object to the procession that we can just barely keep up with by straining every nerve. We don't gain a thing by it. We're not content, on the contrary we are eaten up with ambition to get into a faster procession. People in a slow procession are as happy as people in a fast procession, and they are all as happy as need be except for the mistaken notion that the faster they travel the more they will enjoy themselves. Probably I don't make myself very clear, but I'm very clear in my own mind.

"Now listen to my program. Hereafter $40 a month at the outside pays our rent, and what's more we're going where we can have daylight in every room for that money, I don't care if it's over in Falls Church. And we're going to put $500 in the bank every year, no matter what else we do. And if I ever get $3,000 a year the extra $500 will go into the bank, too; no jump to get into a faster procession on the strength of it."

Mrs. Midgeley had stiffened. "Is that all?" she asked, when he paused.

"I guess that will be about all," Midgeley made answer.

"And if I choose not to consent to your brutal proposal?"

"Oh, you'll consent. What else can you do?"

"I can leave you!"

"But you won't. What would you gain? The law might allow you possibly half my income. What sort of a procession could you keep up with then? Something slower than Mrs. Calthorp's certainly. Come, now!"

"You make it as hard as possible. You—you—"

"I'm a brute, in short. I admit it."

"Do you think I have no pride?"

"Oceans of it!"

"You delight in trampling on it!"

"Not at all. But it has to be trampled on; there's no other way of dealing with it at so small a cost of discomfort."

"A married woman is only a slave, anyway."

"We are all slaves, for that matter. But most of us are more so than we need be. We should all be freer than we are if it were not for our wrong notions of what is worth while. Come, Mabel, the half hour is about up. Do I have to be a brute any longer?"

"I'd rather leave Washington; I'd rather go back to the village where you came from."

"So would I—much rather. But I couldn't earn my salt back there. I am good for nothing except to stay in the classified service."

"How happy I was only a little while ago, and now see—"

"Were you really happy?"

Mrs. Midgeley was not prompt to answer, and thereupon Midgeley, on his part, did the most astonishing thing of all. He went over, quite unbrutally, and knelt down beside his wife and took both her hands in his and looked straight into her eyes. "You can't deceive me, Mabel. You are no such pervert as to be happy in doing what you have done. You were not happy. You only imagined you were. Nothing holds you to the old life but your pride. Is your pride worth the sacrifice?"

Astonishing, truly! But it was somehow more. "Please let me quit being a brute; I don't like it!" whispered Midgeley.

And for answer Mrs. Midgeley yielding all at once, sank into his arms.

Tom Miller, at parting, had exacted a promise. "I want you to write me, off and on," said he.

"I'll do it," said Midgeley.

"I want us to keep in touch," said Tom.

"Sure thing," said Midgeley.

Now the first letter on Midgeley's part was very brief, all on one sheet of paper and by no means filling it. In fact it did no more than apprize Tom of a change in Midgeley's home address, with these words added:

"N. E.—not N. W. Do you get that?"

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The Eleventh Floor

By MILTON CLOUS BARNES

THINGS has changed to beat the band in the last twenty years, and I reckon us leaded relics of the old time paint shop notice it more than most folks. The high-stage game ain't nothin' like it used to be when we swung a couple of worn-out falls on the side of a fourteen-story building and clumb out on a ten or twelve-inch plank with four pots of color and four "thirty-fives"—we didn't use sash tools much cause most of the bosses figgered a man wasted time with small brushes—and tried to see how much dope a couple of blamed fools could slop on in nine hours.

The stage they've got now has a big, wide platform with a solid rail round it, and the old iron hooks that would slip or straighten out once in a while has given way to the lookout, fixed so that the weight don't come on a rotten brick wall or a cheap tin cornice.

When I happen to see some of the boys workin' on one of the new contraptions, takin' it easy, dressed in clean white suits, and carryin' a good Union Card in their pocket to protect 'em from slave-drivers, I always think of when Wild Ed Higgins and I trimmed the high ones for four bucks a day.

I don't guess there ever was a better stage man than Ed, and I know there never was a finer lad nor a braver one. Ed was tall, long-armed, but supple as a cat. He had light, curly hair and laughin' blue eyes that could make men fear him when he got mad. There was somethin' about them changeable eyes of his and the way his jaw squared that kept the rough guys from choosin' him, and so they give him the name, "Wild Ed."

Once when a piece of brick worked loose under the hook and cracked me on the head, Ed tied me to the plank with the life line, and he lowered the whole shebang to the ground by himself. Another time, when he was workin' on the Merchant's Bank, he slid down a three-quarter rope, a clean nine layers from the street, just to lick a big stiff who slammed a newsey.

You've got a mighty good chance to size a feller up when he pulls off stunts above a crowded city street, and don't even drop a pot or brush or a putty knife on nobody. But it ain't any use to talk about it, for it takes a stage man to savvy the burro.

I don't s'pose I'll be apt to forget the day Wild Ed quit the game, when he took his pretty, brown-eyed wife out to their little ranch at Alhambra. Lots of times when I ain't feelin' extra good, or when my old woman gets on one of her tantrums—she can't help it, she's Irish—I sneak away and slip out to Ed's place, and I sit under the umbrella tree with his kids, two curly-headed little chaps, while we wait for Wild Ed to come. I always eat supper with 'em and I know they're glad to have me. Mrs. Ed, the finest little woman in California, calls me Daddy—her father died when she was a baby—and she makes me feel t' home.

Sometimes we talk about the way he won her, and how he made enough to quit the game on. I reckon I'll always remember that, and you know I sort of like to tell the yarn.

Wild Ed and I was on the Consolidated Realty Block. Reagan and Petersen was doin' the job, and they figgered on makin' a little money on it, for they skinned the material from hell to breakfast. The trimmin' color wasn't so bad though it was loaded with silica, but the wall stuff was the worst I ever seen, bein' nothin' in the world but water-color with just enough linseed oil to bind it. Work! Say, that mud would pull the arm off you when you tried to spread it! But it was none of our business what it was made of; we got paid for puttin' it on.

I couldn't help but notice that Ed was feelin' blue. I thought at first that it must be on account of the dope we used; but after watchin' him awhile I made up my mind it was somethin' else. He got kind of careless with the tackle, and finally made a bad tie-off, somethin' I knew he hadn't done in years. I called him for it, good and proper.

"Ed," says I, "what in thunder has got into you? You blamed chump! I ain't goin' to stand your cussedness any longer, and you better come across with a display of brains or we are goin' to have a spill!"

He didn't say nothin' for quite a spell, just sat and looked at me as if he didn't know what to say. Then he breaks out sudden with the question: "Bill, do you know anything about women—young ones, I mean?"

That give me an idea of what was botherin' him, and I knew how to play him.

"Well," says I, "considerin' that I've been married a couple of times, raised six kids till they can take care of themselves, and manage to have a devil of a row with the old lady once in a while, I can't say that I do." Ed looked kind of glum when I admitted the corn, so I went on, "Still, it may be that I have learned a few little self-helps in fifty-five years of schoolin' in such things. If you have somethin' in your noodle, spill it, and I'll analyze your disease."

Ed perks up a bit, and in that out-and-over style of his he gives me his tale of woe.

"You might as well know," he blurts. "Milly and I have quit. She has quit, I ought to say. Some meddlin' old hen has been fillin' her with a bunch of junk about the independence of a modern woman, and it seems that she has been a first-class listener. Anyhow, she has got it into her head that she is cut for a business woman, and she is bound and determined to show all men, me in particular, that the woman of to-day is in a fair way to swamp us all. It ain't no use to argue the matter, it just makes her worse."

Ed did sure look down-in-the-mouth, and I felt sorry for him. I had met the girl once or twict and I knew the man was bugs over her—she was about him, for that matter—but I didn't want to kid him too strong, so I tried to pacify him.

"Aw, don't take it to heart, Ed," I says, "'cause all of us has had them things to contend with. She'll come out of her dream, and the chances is that she'll be the wiser for it."

"No she won't, he comes back. "The trouble is that you don't understand her, Bill. It's all off, for she won't marry

me, and that's all there is to the cat-hop."

"Shucks!" says I. "You—"

"You saw me throw a bum loop when I fastened my end," he interrupts, "and I'm goin' to tell you what made me do it. We are at the eleventh floor, ain't we?" he asks.

"We are," I answers, glancin' up and countin' from the top. "This old fire-trap is thirteen, not countin' basement nor the extra observatory on the roof."

"Well—you see, Milly is tryin' to pound a typewriter in an office on this very floor—I don't know which office it is, for she wouldn't tell me—and I'll bet a week's pay that she's the worst stenographer in the whole darned place! Say, Bill, wouldn't it drive you batty?"

"Now, look here, Ed," I says, "there is no use gettin' excited about this business. If you'll promise to act like a regular stage man, I think I can frame up somethin'! In the meantime we had better take our hand out of the firm's pocket. Reagan and Petersen have got to get rich off this job."

Ed sort of got lined out, and I jollied him right along till we brought the stretch down. I never bothered my head about his little spat with Milly, it bein' such a trifflin' affair for to worry over.

At half-past nine, the next mornin', we had started down from the top again, and we was gettin' along fine, when Ed has another of his fits. The first I noticed him, he was all humped up like a prize rooster with the pip, and his funeral look sure got my goat.

"Forget it!" I snarls. "For the love of Pete, watch what you're about!"

He made his tie all right, but he jest stood by the window without makin' a move. I started to say somethin', but he shut me off with a look. Then he stoops down like a flash and pries up the lower sash with his scraper. I was glarin' at him, wonderin' what was wrong, and on the point of swearin'. Ed yells, "Come on," and dives through the window before I could open my mouth.

There was no time for me to do any thinkin'. In about five seconds I was across that plank and crawlin' after Ed. When a man has rode a stage for twenty-five years he don't hug the board when he starts to travel.

The shades was down, and I can't see any too good, so I shot 'em up when I hit the floor. The first glance showed me a girl tied hand and foot to a big chair.

"Milly!" Ed lets out. He took a gag out of her mouth and I pulled out my knife and cut the cords.

"E-e-Ed!" she gasps, half strangled from the gag, "Catch him—catch him! He's a thief—robbed the Morgan residence!"

We both made a rush for the door. It was locked on the outside. Ed threw his weight on it, but it didn't budge.

"No use," I snaps, seein' that it was metal-bound and one of the heavy kind. Then I get the idea of my life. The stage, Ed—it's our only chance!" And I shins over the sill and on the plank.

Ed hands Milly out, climbs aboard, and we take our places at the falls. The girl is scared plumb stiff, but she is a game little thing and just hangs on to Ed, her face whiter than zinc paste.

"Ready?" he rasps out.

"Go!" I shot back.

I s'pose I've handled the rope as much as any of 'em, but in all my life I never made a drop like that one. I wrapped the rope around my left arm, stuck out my foot to keep the bumper away from

the wall, and let her slide. My arm was burned to the quick and the holes that was scorched in my hands took weeks to heal. It was all we could do to keep from smashin' into the cement below, and it sure was luck that nobody happened to be under us.

We landed within thirty feet of the entrance to the building. Our paint was all over the street, but we didn't even think of it, much less care. The three of us hit the high spots for the elevators.

"Show him to me!" barks Ed, his eyes hard as steel.

The cage comes down, stops, and out steps a big heavy-set guy with a black travelin' bag in his hand.

"That's him," whispers Milly, just as the fellow pipes us.

Wild Ed is into him like a big cat. He sends the bird to the wall with a straight left drive, crosses with his right to the jaw, almost smashin' the wall with the fellow's head. The guy slips to the floor just as Ed brings up an uppercut from the hip.

In ten seconds it is all over but the shoutin'. The place is full of people, pushin' and shovin' like a band of sheep.

"The cops! Gangway!" somebody yells. And a traffic officer and a couple of plain clothes men breaks through the circle round us.

"We've got him," sobs Milly. "He's the man who robbed the Morgan residence last week. The loot is in his grip," she says, pointin' to the bag I had picked up.

"Come on, all of you," orders the cop. "We settle this at the station."

We pick up Mr. Real Estate and pile into the patrol wagon. We sure are a sight for all of us is covered with Petersen's Emulsion from head to foot, and Ed and I has got blood drippin' from our hands, just like a couple of Huns. It ain't any wonder that the police won't listen to us.

But, anyhow, we pull into headquarters, where the chief grills us for fair. It is quite a while before he gets the thing through his head, but when we convince him that we've captured a burglar and ain't a movie outfit he grins and scratches his gray head.

"You ought to be hung for this, all of you," he says, "but considerin' it's your first offense I think I'll let you off. By the way," he adds, sort of off-hand like, "how are you goin' to split the reward? There is sixty-five hundred on this man's head, you know."

Well, you should have seen us look at each other when he told us that. I could see myself burnin' the old mortgage on my acre at Ramona, buildin' a new shanty and, of course, paintin' it myself. Ed is laffin like a kid, smearin' his bloody hand all over Milly's collar; and the girl is lookin' up at him with those sparklin' brown eyes of her's. I can see the whole blamed plot.

"Oh, just stack it in three piles," says Ed. "I guess that suits everybody."

"It can't be done, Ed," I suggests. "Better buy the girl a ring with the odd two hundred, hadn't you?"

Little Milly fairly hugs me for sayin' that. "That is lovely of you, Daddy," she says.

As we go to the building to change our clothes, she tells us about her boss. It seems as if he was passin' himself off for a realty dealer and makin' a regular business of robbin' wealthy people. You see, he could get a line on them that way. He done his work at night, and nobody suspected him. When he hires

Milly to stay in the office, he forgets about there bein' some of his stuff in his desk, and she comes across jewelry that has the Morgan monogram on it while huntin' for some carbon paper. Naturally she gets suspicious for she has read in the papers about the robbery; but she must have given herself away 'cause Mr. LeGrange, as he calls himself, puts up a job on her. He lets on that he is goin' out for a few hours, and then he comes back and catches her examinin' the loot in the drawer.

Le Grange sees that the game is up, so he tries to make his getaway. He sneaks up behind Milly and chokes her, then he crams a towel in her mouth and binds her to the chair. Just as he has got his grip packed and goin' out the door, Ed comes into the room, hearin' the racket through the window, one of the upper sash bein' down a few inches.

"I don't see where I get a third of the reward," I chimes in, after I hear the story. "It don't sound right to me."

"Aw, cut that stuff out, Bill," says Ed, getting peevish. "If it hadn't been for you we never could have got him—and then, you see, you helped Milly and I out of a little misunderstanding.

Well, Ed had to promise Milly that he would never go up again, and I got to thinkin' it over and I said I'd quit too; there didn't appear to be any sense in my takin' such chances.

When we was leavin' the building, who should we meet but Reagan, the boss. He was mad as a wet hen.

"You fellers better clean up that mess on the street and take care of the stage," he snarls at us.

I just takes a slant at that fat loafer and I says, "You can keep the day's pay comin' to me, Reagan, and scrub the street yourself."

"You boys will never swing another brush for me," he howls.

Wild Ed laughs right in his face.

"You're right we won't, Reagan," he says.

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The $5,000.00 BLACK CAT Prize Short Story Contest Conditions will be announced in the January number.

When San Gavino Fell

By D. E. ERNEST

SAN GAVINO had fallen. It was in the hands of General Don Felipe Nasario Gallardo and his army of twenty-nine brave *revoltosos*. There had been a battle. *Madre de Dios!* What a battle! The *insurrectos* had approached the day before and encamped in the trenches dug when San Gavino was besieged by *Maderistas*. A boy from the town had strayed within range and Colonel Louis Gonzales had fired in his general direction with a shotgun. Taking the hint, the federal garrison of thirteen silently retreated during the night, leaving San Gavino at the mercy of the revolutionists.

C a r a m b a! Also 15,674,329 other words not found in Castilian Sunday school tracts. With the federals had gone one wagon and in that wagon was all the food in San Gavino. The army had the town but the army had nothing to eat. The materials for *enchilades, chili con carne,* and *tortillas* were not to be found. Even the *frijoles* were lacking. Long and earnestly had the army foraged among the adobe buildings, but beyond a squash that one major picked from a dying vine the quest was without result.

General Don Felipe Nasario Gallardo, commander-in-chief of the starving army, was in the patio of the mayor's residence. He should have been standing with folded arms, as the general of a certain starved army that once spent the winter at Valley Forge instead of Palm Beach stands in the pictures that illustrate the school histories—but he wasn't. General Don Felipe-and-the-rest-of-it lay in a hammock swung between two cottonwood trees, and smoked a cigarette. There had been a time when the general thought that as long as tobacco and brown paper were to be had it would make no difference whether he did or did not eat; now he knew that he had been wrong.

For there was an emptiness, a vagueness, amidships. It would not have been quite so bad had the soldiers not been complaining that the time since they had partaken of food was long. Their complaints had reminded General Don Felipe that the time since he had eaten was of about the same duration—some two days. He had not meant to be a martyr quite so soon when he started that revolution.

"Call Captain Ramon Bernal, my faithful family servant," the general suddenly ordered of Lieutenant Tomas Talamantes, who was on guard.

Captain Ramon Bernal was summoned. When he stood within the patio, General Gallardo directed:

"Stand without and double the guard. Put none but Mexicans on guard to-day. I would speak privately with Colonel Bernal."

Ramon, who had been leaning far over to make the emptiness seem less empty, straightened when he was called "Colonel Bernal" and looked inquiringly at his general.

"Aye, 'tis true," General Gallardo affirmed when they were alone. "Have you not been a faithful servant to my lamented father and myself? Have you not proven yourself worthy to bear the title of captain, which I have bestowed upon you? And now that I have the power, why should I not reward you with even greater honors?"

Ramon bowed his head in mute acquiescence. His heart was too full for speech.

"I am going to commission you a colonel when you carry out a delicate mission, which I have chosen you, from among all my brave and gallant followers, to undertake. Captain Ramon Bernal, are you a man of honor?"

"Unto death, Your Excellency."

General Gallardo seemed pleased with this reply. He took from his pocket a coin. It was an American nickel!

"I have here one five-cent piece, all that remains of my treasury," said the commander. "I crave one cheese sandwich. The nearest place where such a delicacy can be obtained is in the American city of Diorite, just across the international border from San Gavino. Can I trust you to take this coin and bring back one Swiss cheese sandwich?"

Ramon drew a long and tremulous breath when the nature of his mission was explained to him, but he replied bravely:

"You can trust me, Your Excellency."

General Gallardo impressively handed the nickel to Captain Bernal, who removed the red bandana handkerchief from about his neck and carefully tied the money in one corner. Handkerchief and all went into the hip pocket of his overalls. With another salute he was gone.

The general did not know the enormousness of the difficulty with which Ramon was confronted, and Ramon, true soldier that he was, did not tell him. But Ramon had been in Diorite and he knew that Swiss cheese sandwiches were ten cents apiece, not five.

Diorite and San Gavino are practically the same town, but Diorite is in the United States and San Gavino is in Mexico. All that separates them is a narrow street.

On one side of the street lay Diorite and food, including Swiss cheese sandwiches; on the other side lay San Gavino and starvation.

When he crossed this street, with the invisible international line running through its center, Ramon was wondering how he would obtain a Swiss cheese sandwich with only half the market price thereof to offer. He had heard of two ways to get things—one was to buy and the other was to steal. Since buying seemed out of the question, he must steal. Ah, to steal for his general and for the cause! Surely he was a true patriot. *Abajo* Madero! *Viva* Gallardo! And if the general learned of his devotion—ah! He might even make him a major general!

A heavy hand fell upon Ramon's shoulder, and his hand flew to his belt, but he remembered that he had left his revolver in San Gavino, since the Americans were extremely sensitive about armed Mexicans crossing the border. He turned to confront a great, red-haired Irishman.

"Want a job, *Colo?*" asked the Hibernian.

"No! No!" Captain Ramon hastened to deny.

"Dollar a day, United States," the

stranger continued persuasively. "Got jobs for you and for forty or fifty more like you, diggin' the new town sewer."

Ramon shook his head regretfully but positively.

"Come out where the sewer outfit is, east of the town, if you change your mind," said the Irishman as he turned to go. "And tell all the Mex. boys there's plenty of work for 'em."

A dollar a day! For the first time Ramon was almost sorry that he had joined the revolutionists. With a mighty effort he put temptation from him and continued his search for the Swiss cheese sandwich that might be stolen or bought for a nickel.

Down the street he came to a shabby little cubby-hole between a saloon and a grocery store, wherein a Greek was frying delicious hamburger steaks and sausages. Ramon knew that they were delicious because he smelled them. He edged nearer and perceived a little pile of paper-wrapped squares at one end of the counter. Above the squares was this placard:

CHEESE SANDWICHES
TEN CENTS

"Ah, I see that you have cheese sandwiches," said Ramon in his politest Spanish, leaning his elbows upon the counter as near as he dared to those objects of his search.

"Si," replied the Greek, proud to have understood. *"Yo hablo Espanol."*

"Are they Swiss cheese sandwiches?"

"Si, senor."

"I do not like Swiss cheese. Perhaps you would prepare me a sandwich with the cheese of the Americans."

"Si, in a second."

The Greek turned to slice two wedges of bread from a loaf. As he did so Ramon's hand shot out and seized one of the despised Swiss cheese sandwiches. He tried to thrust it into the pocket of his jumper, or blue coat. With a sinking of the heart he realized that the opening was too small.

And the Greek had seen. He let out a yell, and round the corner came a burly policeman. Ramon started to flee and ran right into the arms of the officer, who brought him up with a jerk.

"Here, what's all the trouble?" the policeman demanded.

"He steal-a da san'wich," the Greek explained excitedly.

"Did you steal this?" the arm of the law questioned accusingly, taking the sandwich in his own hand.

Ramon's teeth were chattering. Guilt showed plainly on his face.

"You'll have to come with me to the station. You too, Diogenes, so you can swear to the complaint."

The Greek called someone to watch his lunch stand, and the trio started for the police station. Still shuddering, his legs about to double under him, Ramon was ushered into the presence of a stern-looking desk-sergeant. Captain Ramon knew in his heart that his career had come to an inglorious end. His honor as a *revoltoso* was lost. Besides, what were the Americans going to do to him for stealing that sandwich?

Impressively the policeman laid the sandwich on the desk and told the story of Ramon's infamous crime. Frequently the Greek broke in to add details. The sergeant did not seem to be deeply impressed and inquired of Ramon his name.

"Juan Bravo," lied Ramon.

He was entered in a great book as Juan Bravo and the sergeant gave orders

that he be searched. Then Ramon knew that he was going to lose the nickel, the nickel that General Gallardo had entrusted to his care. He had failed to obtain the sandwich, the nickel was going to be taken from him, and he was not to be permitted to return to San Gavino.

"What's the Greek's name?" asked the sergeant.

For an instant the policeman turned from Ramon, whom he had just started to search. Like a flash, Ramon leaped through an open window. He alighted heavily on the ground below and pitched forward, skinning the palms of his hands on the gravel walk; then he darted across the city-hall plaza.

The Greek was just behind him, shouting incoherently and waving his arms wildly. Farther back was the policeman, proceeding more leisurely and laughing, probably at the Greek. It was not his intention to expend much energy in chasing a sandwich thief.

Ramon burst through the swinging doors of a saloon and passed through a side door that led into a hotel office. Once in the office he checked his speed. He strolled nonchalantly to the plateglass window in front and saw the Greek hurry into the saloon. Ramon waited till the policeman had also disappeared inside, and walked out upon the street.

The search for the Swiss cheese sandwich was resumed. Ramon found several places where such sandwiches were to be had but they were all ten cents apiece and there was never a chance to steal one. Several times he offered the nickel for one, only to have it refused with scorn.

Four hours had Ramon been absent from San Gavino. The general must be very hungry, he thought. So was Ramon. The gods were good. When he was about to give up in despair he came upon a poor little lunch counter on a back street. Upon the counter were two piles of sandwiches and a placard:

SWISS CHEESE SANDWICHES
MADE TODAY, TEN CENTS
MADE YESTERDAY, FIVE CENTS

Ramon carefully extracted the nickel from the folds of the bandana and pushed it across the counter. He was handed a sandwich. Through the paraffin paper he felt it lovingly. The bread was somewhat dry and hard, but it was a Swiss cheese sandwich! The general had not specified that his sandwich must be of any particular age.

Tenderly, fondly, Ramon bore the sandwich toward San Gavino. He undid one corner of the paper and inserted his nose in the aperture, that he might sniff the deliciousness. He touched his tongue to the wedge of cheese that protruded from between the slices of bread. Would it make any difference if he ate just a little of the sandwich? Ah, but he had sworn as a man of honor that he would deliver the sandwich whole.

But what right had General Gallardo to expect a complete sandwich for half the price of one? Ramon felt in his heart of hearts that the general had no right whatever to demand more than half a sandwich for half a dime. Since he, Colonel (to be) Ramon Bernal, had succeeded in securing a whole sandwich for half the price, was not half the sandwich rightfully his?

Ramon withdraw into an alley and sat down in the shade of an adobe. He took the paper from the sandwich and paused. How was he to divide the sandwich without a knife? An empty to-

mato can at his feet gave him an idea. He worked a piece of tin loose from the top and with this severed the sandwich in the center.

One half Ramon devoured. Ah, but that was a perfect sandwich! What if it was a day old! The flavor was there.

The other half he carefully rewrapped in the paraffin paper. Greatly refreshed, he hurried to the headquarters of General Gallardo.

"It's about time!" thundered the general when Captain Bernal was again admitted. "Do you think I can live forever upon the prospect of a cheese sandwich to eat ? Where is it?"

Ramon held out the half portion he had retained. The general seized it, tore off the paper, and thrust the morsel into his mouth.

"But this is only half a sandwich," he shouted when he had gulped down the first mouthful. "Why did you not bring me a complete sandwich, *peon?*"

"The price of a sandwich is ten cents. I was able to get only half of one for five."

The general stopped and examined the edge that had been cut by the tin from the tomato can.

"You lie!" he screamed. "You stole half the sandwich of your starving general. Traitor!"

"Bah! You had better go back to herding burros. You know nothing of war. You are no general."

Gallardo took one step toward Bernal and struck him in the face.

This was too much for the proud Ramon to pass. He returned the blow and in an instant the two were rolling on the floor of the patio. Wild yells rent the air.

Just as Ramon climbed on top of the general and began to press his fingers into his antagonist's neck, the army swarmed in. A major and a lieutenant pulled Ramon off.

"What's the matter?" the army wanted to know.

"He called me a thief and struck me," charged Ramon, shaking his fist at Gallardo, now struggling to his feet. "Me, Colonel Ramon Bernal! Just after he had eaten a cheese sandwich."

This was all that was needed to turn the army against the general. While his soldiers had starved he had fattened on a cheese sandwich.

"Abajo Gallardo!" yelled some leading spirit. *"Abajo* Gallardo!" howled the army. *"Viva* Ramon Bernal!"

Rough hands were laid on Gallardo and he was hustled out of the patio. Sundry kicks were applied where they would do the most good. Ramon was popular, and General Gallardo had been commanding the army too long for the army to like him. When he was outside he broke away from those who had once followed him and fled down the street toward the international line.

"Viva General Bernal!" shouted the soldiers, returning and gathering around Ramon. "He is the general who will lead us to freedom and to food."

"Your confidence is not misplaced, my brave men," said General Bernal when he could make himself heard. "You shall be led to freedom and to food. Across there, in the United States, lie both. I have a good friend there who will let us dig a sewer and pay us a dollar each day, in American money."

"Lead on! Lead on!"

"Viva Bernal!" applauded the army once more, as it invaded the United States.

The Blind Goddess Nods

By DAVID A. WASSON

THE Gloucester fishing schooner Manatee, dogging mackerell off the Maine coast, capped a month of lean luck when the cook scalded himself severely and had to be landed at Bayhaven. While Skipper Charley Wales ransacked the water front of the somnolent little hamlet for another chef, man after man of the crew stripped to the waist among the pots and kettles, and with indifferent success assumed the rôle of ministering angel to his hungry fellows. The result of such labors was simply to make more evident the grim fact that the sixteen men were starving in the midst of plenty.

Three days passed, Skipper Charley, in desperation, telegraphed to Rivermouth for a new cook, and two of the crew went ashore and conveniently failed to return. Bayhaven knew not how closely its quiet harbor escaped a tragedy; knew not that potential malefactors lurked in the sooty, wild-eyed men who daily met the rickety little jerkwater train as it pulled into the station. Each time the vessel's reception committee failed to discover among the straggling passengers who got off the single combination coach any person who looked in the least as though he would be of help in the present strait; even on the third day, when an unprecedented crowd of four people disembarked.

First came the village storekeeper, back from a stock-replenishing trip; then a wiry, pale-faced young fellow of middle height, in a tall silk hat and light summer overcoat—possibly the minister; next, two women whom the young man helped to alight with their bundles, politely doffing his hat as he did so.

"Well, boys," said Skipper Charley despondently as he turned away, "I don't see but what we might jest as well git off aboard agin, and try to—"

"Ah, there, sports!" called he of the silk hat at this moment. "If you are the Manatee's bunch give me a hand with this dunnage, will you?"

"Suffering fishhooks, it's the Duke!" gasped one of the crew; but the delegates rose nobly to the occasion, and in a few minutes more the new cook and his trunk were bumping alongside the vessel in a dory.

"No use, Elder, we're past all missionaryin'," announced old Joe Gunnell lugubriously, as he came out of the forecastle followed by an eddy of blue smoke and a distinct odor of scorching.

"Missionary nothin'! He's the undertaker, and he's got more git-up-and-git to him than anybody I've seen ashore there yit!" contributed another dyspeptic looking individual.

The new cook, however, held his tall hat in one hand and backed gingerly below for a survey of his new domains. In a moment up he popped again.

"Cap'n Wales," he announced, "I was running the Martinique Hotel when Mount Pelee cut loose, but take it from me the mess down there could give it cards and spades! What in Sam Hill

has been turned loose here, anyhow?" And with an air of intense disgust he bent over and detached a fragment of alleged clam fritter from the sole of one polished russet shoe.

Skipper Charley explained profusely; the cook concluded to stay a while at any rate, and began to get out of his shore toggery with evident distaste. The big trunk was unlocked as it lay on deck and he proceeded to don working garments, quite oblivious of the audible doubts cast upon the calibre of a man who wore underclothes in summer.

"Five years ago last spring," he volunteered as he worked himself into a snowy jumper, "I was assistant governor-general of the Philippines, and since then, believe me, there's nothing to it when I work in anything but white."

Another dory banged alongside, and her occupant, a stout, red-faced man in a shiny blue serge suit, came over the rail, painter in hand. "Heard you were short a man," he said to the skipper gruffly.

"Yep, two," said Captain Charley briefly. "Wanter go along?"

"That's what I came for; name's Hooker!" replied the newcomer with equal directness. And he promptly severed shore ties by the simple and popular method of casting adrift his borrowed dory and allowing her to find her way back to her outraged owner as best she might.

Soon a black smoke poured from the stove funnel, and half a dozen times in succession the new cook came on deck and drew buckets of water from the gaudily painted butt by the foremast. Then several pails of ashes and eggshells were brought up and thrown over the side, followed by such quantities of abortive puddings, biscuits and cakes as might well suggest to a stranger the loss of a city garbage scow in the vicinity.

"Believe me, the time I cleaned up Omaha for the Federal authorities after the tornado hasn't got anything on this, and that's going some," he observed. An hour later he was reported to be scrubbing the forecastle floor—a piece of news that drew forth more criticism.

"Cal'late we'll git grub along about to-morrer night," growled old Joe. "That is, if the blamed dude knows how to cook at all, which I doubt!" But a short time later the supper bell was rung vigorously, and the crew of the Manatee sat down to their best meal for many days.

"Was Delmonico's chef four years ago," he said modestly to compliments.

Then began a new era aboard the Manatee; an era not only of sumptuous fare, but of doughnuts, cookies and coffee in unlimited quantities for mugging up at all hours. That the new cook often assisted in dressing a deck of mackerel for hours under the stars made no difference in the promptness of the piping hot meal that invariably followed the back-breaking work, no matter what the time. It only served as a pleasant reminder, he observed, of the days when he controlled the red snapper fishery out of Pensacola. The crew began to brace up and catch fish. Small wonder that the Duke's little conceits were good-naturedly countenanced by most of the crew, and that the Manatee's crowd began to brag of their find to the other vessels of the seining fleet.

Old Joe Gunnell and the new hand did not relish the dapper little upstart's monopoly of attention. Old Joe had

long enjoyed the reputation of champion misanthrope of the fleet and the badinage that went with it. Hooker had apparently come aboard with the intention of becoming cock of the forecastle, but his blatant yarns of great accomplishment failed to conceal the fact that he was anything but a good fisherman, and he soon became a joke. And the two unappreciated prodigies formed an alliance over their grievances.

"What chance has good men like me and you got at this day of the world?" said Old Joe sourly, as he savagely whittled the edge of a trawl-tub. "Me and you is thrown into the discard while that little whippersnapper of a dude cook has the whole crew allowin' the sun rises and sets in the seat of his breeches! I cal'late if me and you was to go and learn a few kid monkeyshines, Hooker, they'd fight theirselves for the chance of hangin' round in our company!"

But Mr. Hooker, instead of agreeing to this tirade with profane vehemence, as was his wont, hesitated a moment and then whispered a few words into his crony's ear. Whereat, Mr. Joseph Gunnell's scrubby jaw dropped in blank amazement, and then the owner thereof slapped his thigh with much satisfaction.

"How's that?" said Mr. Hooker, disagreeably, and nudged Joe in the ribs.

But the Manatee continued to find the mackerel, and one calm gray morning, thirty miles off Thatcher's Island, the supply of salt on deck gave out. It became necessary to get several barrels of it from the vessel's hold. A tackle was reeved off, but the cant hooks could not be found and a vexatious delay ensued. Just then the cook, with sleeves rolled up, stuck his head out of the fore-scuttle for a little fresh air.

"Why don't some of you guys beat it down there and pass up a few of those kegs?" he called presently.

"Yas, I think I see myself passin' up a barrel of salt!" sneered Joe Gunnell, who stood over the hatch with the falls in his hand. "I'll bate dollars to doughnuts there ain't a man aboard kin put one on deck, let alone any—"

"That's the easiest thing we do!" said the cook lightly, lowering himself into the hold. Taking a barrel by the chines he staggeringly swung it at arm's length above his head and lodged it on deck amid a chorus of generous approval. "Sing out when you've got enough of them up there," he called.

"I suppose forty-five years ago you were raising heavy weights for P. T. Barnum!" mimicked Hooker enviously. It was the first time, so far as noticed, that he had acknowledged the cook's existence to such an extent.

"Surest thing you know!" said the man in the white jumper promptly, while Hooker's shipmates shut him up indignantly.

"Look a' here, Hooker," reproved Skipper Charley, taking the scoffer aside, "jest you don't put your oar and rumple his fur the wrong way, and we'll be high-line of the fleet yit, see if we aint! We don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, see? The Duke's the best kind of a mascot!"

"I don't understand what you can see in that little runt!" grumbled Hooker. "He's no good! And as for lifting those barrels, why I was middleweight champion of—"

"By golly then, that's just the ticket! Why didn't you say so before?" ex-

claimed the skipper with disconcerting suddenness, and he took Hooker by the arm and marched him aft to the men. "Boys, here we have it!" he told them. "Here's a second Fitzimmons been hidin' his light under a trawl-tub for two weeks, and we been missin' all kinds of fun. How about—"

"Oh, Duke!" called a perspicacious member of the crew. "Bring up the mitts! We need ye!" The cook laughingly came on deck, whiping his hands on his apron.

"I ain't in the cradle-snatchin' business!" said Hooker contemptuously.

"We'll see about that later!" declared Skipper Charley. "Ye wouldn't deprive us pore hard-workin' sailormen of a little pleasure, would ye?"

"Get busy, Hooker! Now's your chance to make good!" bantered the crew.

Hooker plainly had considerable science, but it soon became evident that the Duke was simply toying with him; touching him up cleverly in spots, and dodging his sledgehammer blows in a most exasperating manner. Hooker was not the sort to submit long to this kind of bull-baiting. Suddenly he made a mad rush at his elusive opponent and actually attempted to kick him with his heavy red fishing boots. Then the cook lost his smile. From abreast the main rigging aft, around the quarter deck and forward again to the windlassbitts, Hooker cringed and backed; till at length, being fairly cornered, down he went on deck in a heap amid frantic yells from the crew.

But that attempt at kicking was an unlucky break on Hooker's part. The Duke wasn't quite through with him yet. Whipping off his gloves he pounced on the old-time middle-weight champion before he could regain his feet, and in spite of his struggles, a moment later Hooker the doughty, was standing on his head in the great coil of six-inch cable on the port bow; while the sea around resounded with a babel of yells and catcalls, blasts from the patent foghorn, and a deafening clanging of the ship's bell.

And the jubilant crew rode their mascot around the littered decks on their broad shoulders, and swore roundly that his like was not to be found between Quoddy Head and Cape Hatteras.

"Oh, that's nothing, fellows," disclaimed the cook blushingly. "Ten years ago in Frisco I put it all over John L. Sullivan in less time that that!"

As for the defeated pugilist, he extricated himself from his undignified position with some difficulty and walked aft with face of an apoplectic hue and body a-tremble with rage. The crew took good care to keep beyond his reach.

"You—you damned little manikin!" he roared, shaking his huge fist, and unmindful of the epithet's reflection on his own prowess. "You'll laugh out of the other side of your face before I get through with you! I'll land you behind bars, where you belong! What do you think I'm here for, anyway?"

"That's what I've been wondering, Hooker!" mused the skipper. "Not to sailorize, that's blamed sure!"

"I'll sailorize with any of you!" snapped Hooker, and then he ripped open his coat and showed a shiny badge on his vest front. "See that? If this old garbage scow ever gets into Massachusetts waters again I'll undertake to put one Richard Trimble where he won't—"

"Back up, neighbor, you're in the

wrong stall!" advised Skipper Charley. "There ain't no sech feller aboard here."

But at this juncture the cook of the Manatee, befrocked again, walked up and calmly confronted the sheriff. "Looking for me?" he demanded.

"What's the matter, Duke? What's he got on ye?" clamored half a dozen voices. "Say the word and we'll head him up in a barrel! Say the word, Duke!"

The mascot of the Manatee, however, waved a deprecatory hand toward his would be protectors. "Oh, that's all right, fellows!" he assured them blandly. "I'm the guy that put the 'i' in penitentiary!"

"Well, by the jumpin' Jehosaphat, that blowhard ain't goin' to—" began a man valiantly, but Skipper Charley interrupted him.

"No, no, Bill, none of that!" he said decidedly. "You'd get yerselves inter all kinds of trouble that way. Our hands is tied, I'm afraid!"

"School-o!" sang the lookout on the foremast.

"Thank goodness our mascot's still on the job, anyways!" said a man fervently, and the crew tumbled overside into a seine boat piled high with rusty looking twine.

But Sheriff Hooker folded his arms and assumed a truly Napoleonic pose. "Not for me!" he announced. "I stay right aboard here and keep an eye on this bird! I'm an official of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the discharge of my duties!"

"I don't give a damn if you're Most Supreme Exalted Muckymuck of the Eminent Order of Hod-carriers!" rapped out the skipper. "You've signed articles aboard this packet jest now, and by the great horn spoon you'll obey my orders while you're on the high seas or I'll put ye in irons! Now pile into that seine boat or I'll sic the cook on ye agin! I ain't interferin' with yer duty none, I tell ye! You've got the poor Duke right where ye want him, ain't ye? Sea's as smooth as a mill pond and he can't git away unless he sprouts wings."

"Don't cheer, boys, the poor devils are dying!" said the cook solemnly, as the humbled representative of the Commonwealth complied in thoughtful silence.

Captain Charley and the lookout jockeyed the Manatee into the neighborhood of the frothing quarry, and then they too, took their places in the seine boat. Two more men got into the attendant dory on the other side of the schooner and they all cast off, leaving the cook, as customary, on board as ship-keeper.

Like a lifeboat off to a rescue the long white seine boat drove foaming toward the fish, Skipper Charley at the twenty-foot steering oar, a picturesque figure in yellow oilskins, with two inches of black clay pipe parting his heavy grizzled moustache.

And then, with the great purse-seine around a fat school, the boats fast to the biggest haul of the season, and the whole outfit three miles to leeward of the schooner, a wicked-looking squall of wind and rain screamed with scant warning out of the cloudbanked northeast. How the cook single-handed got the mainsail and jib down after the Manatee had been knocked flat on her beam-ends, how he ran blindly down the wind under a goose-winged foresail and shot up deftly alongside the desperately bailing boat's crew, and how, as the result of his good seamanship, they saved every last fish,

are matters still talked of aboard the Manatee.

Joe Gunnell walked up to the cook after they had got everything snugged down, and the words he spoke sounded as if they were being windlassed out of him. Hooker he ignored altogether. "Duke," said he, "hereafter you act as damn crazy as ye please, and lie till ye're black in the face, and while ye're aboard here I'll fight the fust galoot that opens his head to ye! Duke, ye're—some little cook, but ye're no kind of a crook! Why hadn't ye skipped out with the vessel while ye had the chance?"

"What he did will probably have the effect of shortening his sentence!" conceded Hooker. "It was a fair job!"

"Oh, that's nothing, girls!" said the Duke with a wink. "Thirteen years ago I went around the world with Captain Joshua Slocum on one of his famous single-handed trips."

But the squall was the forerunner of a heavy gale of wind, and much as Captain Charley wished to stay at sea and keep the cook aboard as long as possible, he finally felt obliged to square the Manatee away under short canvas. She ran shoreward for shelter amid a riot of leaping, frosty combers. A funereal air brooded over the wet decks and even the warm forecastle, where good fellowship usually held full sway. The cook himself seemed perfectly unconcerned as his hours of liberty shortened.

Into Gloucester Harbor boiled the Manatee, just as wild, inky night fell. Captain Charley, feeling in no mood to parry the thrusts of the furious squalls that screamed out of the haven, let go an inchor inside Ten-Pound Island, tied everything up and disconsolately stuck up a riding light.

"Richard Trimble, I arrest you in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts!" proclaimed Sheriff Hooker pompously, drawing forth his warrant. "And you'd better come ashore with me without making any fuss."

"I wouldn't try to land to-night if I was you, sheriff," said the skipper politely. "These flaws is strikin' heavier every minute, and you'd be liable to go adrift tryin' to go ashore in a dory. I wouldn't want the state to run no risk of losin' a dangerous criminal! Boys, better give her the other mudhook! Looks like we might git a regular old combustible out of this!"

Soon she needed them both, and there was good prospect that she would want more ground tackle. Captain Charley ordered the crew to overhaul the kedge. His voice sounded mightily small in the howl of the storm. The schooner rode the gale amid a weltering froth of whitecaps. They seemed more stray tops lost in the tumult than respectable combers. They raced down the wind as if pursued by demons, and all the time grew hungrier. The surface of the sea was scourged, flayed, lashed into ribbons by the force of the wind. The shrouds hummed in the gusts with a fiendish cadence. Halyards drummed against the masts in frantic tattoo, as if mustering a host of malevolent storm spirits to the fray.

Rain hissed upon them in stinging, blinding torrential sheets that might have come from either sea or sky. It tasted salt upon the lips, and it spouted in sizeable streams through the scuppers. In its pitiless charge it swept and scoured the decks bare as the foam-flecked strand. Both cables stretched far out ahead of the schooner, rigid as bars of

iron, showing the desperate strain on her deep-buried anchors. The drenched crew huddled in the meagre lee of the masts and deck houses, thanking their lucky stars that they had reached a safe harbor when they had. They wondered how it would have been if they had stayed at sea, if this spelled safety!

Did it spell safety? The Manatee bade fair to be in the position of a man who accomplishes an altitude record in an aeroplane and then falls to disaster when a few feet above the ground. For now both anchors began to drag.

Before the shrieking gale, the schooner edged stern first toward the bristling wharves. She hardly looked at the kedge anchor they let go as a last resort. Slowly she drifted up between two piers, reached the end of the dock, and her bow swung around till her main crosstrees sawed the tangle of electric wires skirting the harbor edge.

Then something happened! As the Manatee's wire rigging cut the insulation of the shore wires, every spar, stay and guy on her, leaped instantaneously into wild, uncanny brilliancy. The whole harbor front, the deluged heavens, the infernal night itself blazed with soul-stunning white flashes. The jagged soaring pyrotechnics born of a murderous short circuit dwarfed all mankind besides. Between the unearthly, malignant gushes of light, came blackness such as belongs not to this world, absolute, annihilating, Stygian.

Up town boomed a fire alarm amid the crashing of tortured elms. About the plunging schooner resounded the crunch and squeak of splintering fenders, that told their feeble share of the extremity of her plight. Sulphurous fumes eddied in the nooks, and flaming serpents slashed across the streaming decks, but the crew were housed beyond their reach. Then the electric company shut off the current, and the show was over. Already a vigilant tugboat hovered off the end of the dock, the pungent smoke from her funnel fogging the schooner's deck.

"Are we all here?" panted the skipper, crawling out of the cabin and mopping a perspiring brow.

"All but the sheriff, I callate!" answered someone. "He lit out when we fust fouled the wires, and I'll bate he ain't stopped runnin' yit!"

"Sho!" said the skipper. "Then let's get hold of this tugboat and make tracks out of here while the goin's good!"

The use of red by revolutionists is leading the auctioneers to change their flag to blue; but the red necktie will die harder. —*Boston Herald*

The $5,000.00 BLACK CAT Prize Short Story Contest Conditions will be announced in the January number.

The Psychological Crime

By DE LYSLE FERREE CASS

"IT'S hellish!" groaned Chester K. Barnhart, nervously moistening dry lips for the fiftieth time with his tongue.

His lawyer nodded dourly from the other side of the big glass-topped desk. His eyes squinted somberly at his distinguished client, the corners puckered in calculation.

Social and perhaps business ruin stared the great Chester K. Barnhart in the face. Both men knew that only too well.

The "story" had broken in the afternoon papers: scandal of the nastiest, most insidious sort. Seeing that it so intimately concerned the important Mr. Barnhart, it had been given front-page prominence. Bold-face type blazoned the ignominy across a double column's head where none of the city's millions might miss it.

So far the known details of the situation were meagre, but they were quite enough to make the yellow journals gleeful. The breach-of-promise papers had been filed and the woman in the case had been very willing to talk for publication. City editors found the record of her dubious past in their files. It was the more unsavory linked now with the name of Chester K. Barnhart. Newspapermen failed to reach the financier on the 'phone at his offices, his bachelor apartments, or at any of his clubs. But the woman's statements caught the last editions and the story was written in innuendo. All the world might draw its own conclusions.

"And there seems to be no way out!" muttered Chester K. Barnhart dully. "I've dodged reporters all day long, knowing that they're bound to get to me sooner or later." He shifted uneasily in his swivel chair eyeing his noncommittal attorney accusingly. "Confound it, man, haven't you anything to suggest?"

The lawyer's lips were grim.

"You've got to give the morning papers your side of the affair—some sort of statement," he said. "A man of your standing in the business world can't afford to let this slide. You've always courted publicity Barnhart, and now you're getting it—only differently. You know that the facts are— There goes your 'phone again! Here, I'll answer for you! Yes!.... Yes!.... All right, come over. Mr. Barnhart will see you."

He hung up the receiver.

"That," said he, "was a Morning Clarion man. He'll be here within ten minutes."

The distinguished Mr. Barnhart squirmed in his chair; then subsided hopelessly. There were little drops of perspiration on his forehead.

"So I'm in for it now?" he growled. "Well, all right! I'll take charge of the situation myself from now on. I'll see if these underpaid reporters aren't as susceptible to the clink of American dollars as regular business men are."

"My dear fellow, do you imply that you'll try bribing this man coming from the Clarion?"

"Exactly!" exploded Barnhart, belligerently. He was getting a fresh grip on himself now. "The Clarion is recognized as the most influential paper in town. Whatever version of this mess it prints will be taken as gospel truth by the public. And I don't think that I'll have any particular trouble influencing a $20-a-week reporter to color his copy to suit me. Money talks everywhere."

The lawyer smiled cynically; shook his head.

"Barnhart," he warned, "take a word of advice in time and don't put your theory to test in this case. You don't know newspapermen. They're different from the men you and I rub shoulders with in business. They don't look at money the way we do; don't value it for the same reasons. Otherwise they wouldn't be in the newspaper game."

"Bah!" snorted the great financier, contemptuously. "They're human, aren't they? I'm not going to bribe this Clarion fellow to any felony; simply to manipulate a little story that is none of the damned public's business anyway. Those reporters are working for money just the same as the clerk there in my outer offices. They like it just as well, too—and most of them need it more."

"Maybe so," assented the lawyer doubtfully, "but—"

Pr—rr—rring!

Again the desk 'phone interrupted him. It was the switchboard girl in the main room announcing the arrival of a representative of the all-powerful Clarion.

"Show him in," growled Barnhart. His eyebrows knit closely across his forehead. The taut skin of his knuckles showed white as he gripped the arms of his chair.

But it was a woman, not a self-assured, insouciant youth, that the smug-faced secretary bowed in so significantly—say rather, a girl in the latter twenties, whose face might well have been reckoned pretty had her hair been dressed less plainly, or her hat of a mode more coquettishly calculated. Her dress was as simple and unassuming as her manner. She was altogether lacking in the brisk pertness or the studied sangfroid of the newspaper woman as generally imagined. Her voice was low, yet clear; well modulated. She advanced toward the man in the big chair calmly, without embarrassment.

"I am Miss Herron, of the Clarion," she said.

Her name, no less than the intonation of her voice startled Barnhart from his pose of enforced tranquility. He whirled his chair about to meet her approach; half started up, then sank back limply, gaping.

"Nettie!" he ejaculated, his rather heavy visage slowly crimsoning until the flush met the very roots of his hair. "You—you are here to interview me for the Clarion?"

The girl's face went a bit pale at sight of his tremendous emotion, but she met his eyes steadily. If there was a tremor in her voice, she quickly controlled it. She even essayed a wan smile.

"Yes, I am with the Clarion now, Mr. Barnhart," she responded. "May I not sit?"

The great financier made haste to arise and place a chair conveniently near by for her. He turned to introduce the attorney, only to find that that astute gentleman already had slipped discreetly away. He was glad that was so and a little sigh of unrestrained relief quavered from between his lips. He wanted

no third party here with him and this wraith out of his long-forgotten youth.

"Nettie," he breathed, and paused. The curious admixture of his feelings left him mentally flaccid; unable to proceed.

Involuntarily his mind slipped back the pages of his life, skipped the record of later years wherein he had sacrificed esthetic subtleties to Mammon and used friend and foe alike as but human stepping stones to the pinnacle of commercial success that now was his. For the first time in years he was not arrogantly conscious of the sumptuous furnishings of his private sanctum, of the army of clerks and stenographers in his imposing outer offices, of the mundane affluence that won him deference from high and lowly. Now, he was temporarily oblivious of all that. One long-forgotten picture swam through his mental vision.

For the nonce he was again the youth of nineteen—callow maybe, yet full of life's most optimistic illusions; clean-hearted and with eyes up-strained to a higher ideal, not fixed on a goal straight ahead. Once more he was the lovable, impetuous boy, and she—this girl with the tired eyes who came from the Clarion—she was his little sweetheart, the playmate of pinafore days, the romantic inspiration of school years, the aspiration of his budding manhood.

And that last night, years ago, when they two had parted there in the country town, he had told her of his high ambitions, of how devotedly he loved her and how he only left for the great city that he might make their future the more magnificent when he returned.

As vividly as if it were only yesterday, Chester K. Barnhart, the potent financier, recalled how she had clung to him in that parting embrace, how strangely surprized he had been to find the shy submission of her past little intimacies so suddenly metamorphosed into passionate ardor—a fierce, insistent demand upon his very manhood. For just then he hardly realized that he had opened wide the palpitant woman-soul of the little sweetheart and that never would she be the same again without him. Her intensity had frightened him a little at the time, he remembered. And she had clung, oh so frantically, with her tears salty against his lips!

"Oh, Chester, you won't forget me away off there in the big city, will you, boy? You'll write often to me who waits and longs? And you'll come back for me, lover, won't you?"

"I promise," he had said solemnly, but already his vanity was visualizing worldly triumphs ahead of him. "I promise that I'll come back for you, Nettie."

And the girl from the Clarion, who sat thinking of that selfsame parting scene, recalled distinctly how, as he pledged his faith, the lid of his left eye had drooped so curiously. It had happened when his lips spoke fairly, but a lie was in his heart. Ever since then that facial distortion had signified deceit to her.

Uncontrollably the hot color surmounted the pallor of her cheeks, seeing which Barnhart came to himself with a start. But, incomprehensibly, that momentary reminiscence had altered him. Gone was the acquired pomposity of influential position, the ironical superciliousness that the world had come to say was characteristic of his speech. His easy assurance of manner—that fine suavity under the most trying circumstances which had made him so feared on the exchange—was somehow replaced by

a guilty diffidence in the presence of this woman whom he had not met in all the since as a child she had filled his life's horizon. Indeed, of the two, she was the least constrained.

"Do you prefer that I should question you, or would you rather make a statement for publication in your own way, Mr. Barnhart?" she finally queried.

The even crispness of her tone was like a dash of cold water to the musing man, to the boy that was, who had so shamefully neglected and finally forgotten.

"Won't you call me 'Chester' as—as you used to?" he asked, with an embarrassed attempt at laughter. "Surely, Nettie, we two have known each other long and well enough to dispense with trifling formalities.

The girl's eyebrows elevated the barest fraction of an inch while she seemed to ponder that. She was fiercely conscious of how little time and business cares had aged this man, this girlhood idol of hers; was rebelliously aware of how deeply this proximity stirred her even now. The long years seemed to have but calloused the edges of her wound, not healed it. When she had accepted this assignment to interview him, she had not hesitated. Her brain had been clear, her nerves tranquil, heart cold. And now? Ah! she did not want to—dared not—probe the significance of the unwelcome turmoil in her bosom. For what had she schooled herself to scorn and cynicism all this while if here, at the moment of meeting him again, there should come once more that fluttering of her heart, that tightening in her throat which was sheer, delicious pain. Vaguely she wondered whether her face betrayed the agitation which shook her—and she decided that she did not care.

But Barnhart was a man—a Business Man, if you please—and to him the subtleties of a woman's heart were unrecognized because intangible. He was a shrewd psychologist, but he made his deductions man-like, with a ruthless follow-down of solid logic. He was glad, very glad, that she bore him no active resentment for the scapegrace part he had played in her past; saw her now with more maturely appreciative eyes than formerly he had been capable of; wanted to renew the old fond relationship; to have her know, really know, that he was not so bad as she must think him; to show her that, despite calumny, he never had actually been false to her memory. It was his anxiety to assure her of this last that made him so suddenly plunge into the sorry tale of the entanglement which had drawn his eminent name in big headlines on the front pages of the city's newspapers.

"Let me talk, Nettie," he said earnestly, hitching his chair a bit closer and meeting her cool eyes squarely. "You're here to interview me. It's plain business with you, and, as for me, I suppose it is only common sense that I tell my side of the story for your paper. But it's more than that too, my dear." The term escaped him unconsciously, so naturally that he failed to notice how suddenly the girl's slight figure stiffened. "It's more than just that to me, because right now I'm trying to justify myself in your eyes and not merely to the scandal-mongering mob. My public reputation is at stake, I know, but it's your esteem, Nettie, that I want to retain. Oh, I

realize now full well that I've shown precious little regard for it since last—since last we parted, and I'm not asking that you forgive me that. What I do want you to know though, is that this woman whose story the papers have printed is an adventuress. Her only interest in me is blackmail. Won't you believe me, Nettie?"

A great warmth was creeping up around the girl's heart and a mist momentarily obscured sight of the man's tense face bent toward hers. There was an unmistakable glow in his eyes—she remembered it from the old, sweet days of adolescence—and his words rang true, sincere. She was amazed at the steadiness of her own voice as she answered:

"We reporters are not permitted to inject our own ideas or sentiments into our reports, Mr. Barnhart. But I will see that your statement is written exactly as you give it to me."

The very reserve of the girl made the man more desperate. Her impersonal attitude drove him from his chair and to a restless pacing to and fro about the room. As he walked, he told her the facts of the case: how he had been introduced to the woman with the dubious past at the home of a business associate; how she had developed their purely social acquaintance in hot-house fashion at teas, at dansants, at gay little dinner parties after evenings spent at the theatre in company with other friends. At first all the invitations had come from her. Then, in sheer decency, he had reciprocated in kind, and latterly hostesses had taken it for granted that the two of them were to be asked in company. There had been no sentimental passages between them; only a sort of social camaraderie from which, as time went on, he had found it more and more difficult to extricate himself. He had tried, he said, without avail. He had wished to avoid hurting the lady's feelings. It was all quite innocent. And now she had seen fit to take advantage of it all by suing him for breach of promise. That was all.

The girl reporter heard him in silence. When he at last paused, out of breath, she ventured:

"But certain letters have been published; letters of an intimate, personal nature from you to her. What about them? Are they forged, or did you really write them?"

The man came to an abrupt halt in his wild pacing; stared at her quizzically. For the barest fraction of a second he hesitated. Then:

"Forgeries! Rank fakes, every one of them!"

And, as he said it, the lid of his left eye drooped curiously—that identical facial spasm so poignantly remembered from that night long ago when Chester, the boy, had clasped Nettie, the girl, in his arms, saying: "I promise that I'll come back for you."

And now, once again, in her heart's depths, Nettie, who was become "sob sister" for the Clarion, knew that the man lied to her. And this time was his offense still more impossible to palliate because, for a second time he had fanned high love's flames within her, evoked her trust, her absolute belief, only to dash it aside with deliberate untruth. As a boy he had trifled with her and lied. Now, as a man, he might have philandered again had he been able to read her woman's heart,

but not after she knew that he had lied again.

"And that is all," said Chester Barnhart after a long pause. To which she replied:

"Yes—that is all."

She bade him good-bye and left him standing uncertainly there in the doorway of his magnificent private offices. All the clerks, the stenographers, yes, even the shock-headed office boys, were eyeing him in covert amusement. They all were avid readers of the newspapers, you know, and, in the vicarious parlance of Maybelle, the switchboard operator, "that there shabby-lookin' she-reporter sure did get the boss's goat. Y' otta seen 'im!"

At her battered old desk in the local room of the Morning Clarion, little sweetheart-that-was set herself to the task of pounding out her story on a typewriter that the poorest stenographer in Chester K. Barnhart's offices would have repudiated. She was tired, very tired. Were she a fluffy young debutante, she would have been "sick at heart." A lassitude that was not of over-work was upon her, dulled her every sensibility. Creative thought was beyond her. There was all the accumulated data on the Barnhart story awaiting her inspection in the Morgue envelopes and it was expected that she would assimilate it—work it into her story before typing her interview with its principal character.

But she could not bring herself to do that. In those same envelopes were copies of the incriminating letters from Chester Barnhart to the woman with the dubious past, the love letters he had said he didn't write. The girl could not trust herself to digest their maudlin protestations—the semi-erotic effusions of a man possessed.

"And that is all!" he had told her, so candidly.

It was all. She could see nothing more before her in drab, humdrum existence. She had learned to ignore the ache of childish disillusionment and had reconciled herself to this new life, when, like a meteor, he had plunged warm light into her life again, and as quickly shot on his way, blotting it out.

She wrote up her interview exactly as he had given it to her; added nothing, omitted nothing. When finished, she wearily jerked the last sheet from her machine and tossed the lot to the nearest man on the re-write desk.

"I've a bad headache tonight, Harry," she explained in answer to his inquiring stare. "Don't feel quite equal to going over the whole case again. Do you mind fixing it up for me this once. I'll surely appreciate it if—"

"'S all right!" grunted the re-write man brusquely. "Better beat it if you're not feeling right."

She favored him with a mechanical smile which he was too busy to notice; went back to her desk in the corner and sat numbly there. In time there came the frenzied last call for the copy-boys and the cry "All up!" There was a general scraping of chairs as men got up and stretched luxuriously after their long hours of unremitting strain. The tang of pipe and cigarette smoke began to taint the air. Men were reaching for their coats and hats; shouting eating rendezvous to each other.

The girl left among the last of them. She felt strangely aloof as the crowded

elevator shot downwards; had no response as usual for the rough yet kindly badinage of the boys. Outside the night was muggy with fog, and she paused in the lobby of the building to button the collar of her threadbare jacket more tightly up around her throat. It required an appreciable effort for her to push open the big, heavy doors, and the sticky breath of the early morning struck her face unpleasantly. It was a forty-minute ride on the trolley to her barren room. It would be forty minutes there to-day, to-morrow, next week, and year after year. Just that!

The clock in the town hall was booming one A. M.

As the girl turned with hunched shoulders toward the corner where she would have to wait for her car—the owl car, you know, full of drunken men, home-going scrub-women from the office buildings, and questionable characters at this hour—a man stepped quickly out of the shadows of the entrance and seized her arm.

"Nettie!" he breathed appealingly. "It is Chester. I've been waiting here for you hours long it seems. I thought you never would come."

The girl stared up at him with lacklustre eyes, experienced no thrill at his touch, was profoundly incurious even as to why he was there. Firmly, yet without hurry, she disengaged her arm from his grasp and turned away. But he was at her side again immediately. The dense fog wreathed them all about; was clammy on the girl's face and hair.

Waiting. Yes, he had been waiting down there for her, to reassure himself that she had written that interview favorably toward him; had waited there with truly man-like selfishness, sordid in self-concern.

Dimly she became aware that he was still addressing her.

"When you left me like that this afternoon I was awakened to myself, saw myself as you must have seen me throughout all these years, as any decent man now must see me. Believe me, Nettie, I am not altogether sunk in materialism, haven't changed so very much from the boy you once called 'dear.' But seeing you there so altered, so lacking in the things that should be yours, I awoke to my own unworthiness; realized that the old love had not died, but only lain dormant, stifled under the monstrous self-conceit of one who now wants and needs you as never the boy of long ago did.

"And oh, my dear, it is not easy for me to humble myself thus even to you, but I must for the sake of my own content. I want to confess that I lied to you there in the office this afternoon, lied about those letters that I wrote in fatuous delirium. I wrote them without meaning their written import, for much the same reason that a child likes to play with fire.

"And then, this afternoon when I saw you again, I realized that the old, sweet love of you was still present and stronger than ever. When I saw how, even then, your generous heart overlooked the miserable past and put absolute belief in my story, then I lied about those letters. I lied, dear, because I couldn't bear to have you think that I had been even momentarily false to your memory. I dreaded judgment from you and took what I thought was the easiest way out of it.

"But after you had gone away, be-

lieving me, to write the story, I realized I had chosen the hardest way after all. I had made you the cat's-paw to save me, and that thought hurt worse than all else. I yearned for you; wanted to be able to look you honestly in the face again. So I met the woman's attorney, Nettie, and I paid him the hush-money that is all she ever really desired of me. She is gone now; the case is dropped. I have no right to presume upon our past sentiments now, but at least I can stand clean-breasted before you and say that you have reawakened in Chester Barnhart, the man, the soul of the boy who asked you to be his wife."

The girl shrunk mutely before the torrent of his outburst. Twice she put out fluttering hands to stay him, yet could not. She wanted badly to cry, to lay her tired head on his broad shoulder and rest there.

"I—I think that I understand now, Chester," she said faintly. "You may take me home, I guess."

He signalled a passing taxi and helped her tenderly inside. They skidded along through the rolling mist, saying nothing more, solemnly holding hands. Finally, very gently, he bent and kissed the damp hair beneath her hat.

"With you, dear," he whispered, "hereafter I shall do right and fear no man."

And she, with a half-sob of happiness in her throat answered: "Oh, boy, don't write, and fear no woman."

Green River Anthology

The drys insisted that the wets lost in Ohio, and the wets insisted that the drys lost in Ohio. The only issue that seemed certain was that something was lost in Ohio. —*New York Telegraph*

NO REAL USE FOR THEM

Old customs soon get on the blink,
Things alter here below,
Another decade, tailors think,
Will see hip pockets go.

—*Pittsburgh Sun*

As the Governor of North Carolina might say to the Governor of South Carolina: "It's a much longer time between drinks!"

Old Father Hubbard he
Went to the cupboard
To get his poor self a drink.
When he got there,
The cupboard was bare
So he got him a drink at the sink.

—*Brooklyn Citizen*

It is customary to say a good word for the departed, and in this connection it can be truthfully said of the lamented Mr. John Barleycorn, that no one had more enemies in public or more friends in private. —*Ashland (Mo.) Bugle*

The Wooing of Sadie

By JOSEPH MACKIE

I GUESS probably I never told you about the time we got the new boarding house here, did I? That was some years ago and this place wasn't no metropolis then. There was only a dozen or so houses around here altogether, and the fellows from the A. B. ranch used to do most of their feeding at a wagon that was operated by Sim Ya, one of the oiliest chinks you ever saw. There was about twenty of us eating there when I come and I can't say that any of us got fat.

I think Sim run the wagon like he would a opium joint: figure on giving us something right at the start that would kill our sense of taste and then slip it to us reckless like, till we quit. So we was all pretty well pleased when Bob Stewart announced one day that there was a brand-new inhabitant in our midst and that it was a woman who was going to start a boarding house.

Of course when a fellow gets along in years like me, the fact there's a woman in the vicinity don't get him excited as it does some of these young bucks, but I crowded around with the rest of them to hear all the details so I could tell anybody else if they asked me; I travel quite a bit through these parts and there's always somebody asking me for the news.

Well, it seems that Miss Sadie Bartlett—that was her name—was a cousin or sometning to the blacksmith, and that she was good looking, a little stout, and had to work for her living; also, that she had rented a house and was going to dish up something pretty fancy for us laboring men in the way of eatables. That sounded good to us all right, and the first day she opened up she had a table full of the hungriest looking guys you ever saw, all dressed up in their Sunday clothes, too; that was the funny part of it. It seems that every dad blamed one of the boys had said nothing at all to no one but just gone ahead and washed his hands and face and put on his necktie and combed his hair, and so forth, as though he was going to a wedding or something. I don't know why they done it, either, 'cause there wasn't none of them no lady killers, but I guess there's something about a woman that sort of makes a man dress up and try to show off a little.

I remember we had quite a spread too, though I couldn't enjoy it as much as I'd liked to on account of my collar being too high, or me not being used to wearing laundry; anyhow, we all done our best not to spill nothing on the tablecloth and I guess we come out all right.

It made me laugh to see the way the fellows hung around after dinner, trying to make a hit with Sadie. I don't like to see a man make a fool of himself that way. It was positively sickening. One of them went after a pail of water, somebody offered to sweep the floor, and somebody else wanted to help put the dishes away. They acted as if

they hadn't never saw a woman before. Two of them pretty near had a fight over the chairs; Tommy Walters said they ought to be slid under the table and big Charley Mattson thought they ought to be set back against the wall. I laughed so I nearly dropped the plate I was wiping.

We got quite well acquainted that day and of course we all ate there regular after that. Nobody missed a meal for fear someone else would get ahead of him some way. And then at night when we got through work, there was always a bunch of fellows hanging around the house. You'd see one sitting on the fence, another come riding along on his horse, and a couple on the porch, all the time. There was always two or three inside 'cause Sadie liked company, and she'd get us to singing. You could hear the boys practicing some fool song most any time of day, when they ought to be working. It got on my nerves. I know one day me and Joe Blake had some hard words because the darn fool come howling away at some sentimental thing about eyes of blue, just while I was trying to get the hang of that one that goes, "You maa-aad me loo-oove you," and so on. He never had no voice anyway.

Then the fellows started bringing presents to Sadie and the way some of them chaps spent their money was scandalous. Bob Stewart shows up one night with a fancy clock he'd sent away for. I'll bet it didn't cost him more than four-fifty at that, but the way Sadie thanked him you'd of thought it was worth a hundred dollars. Then, a few days later, old Pete Mathews give her a arm chair that he picked up somewhere and fixed over himself, and then Steve Burby blew in a month's salary on a sofa. I suppose he had an idea he might get to sit on it with Sadie. Did you ever see men go crazy like that over a female?

Me being a little older and more experienced in the ways of the world, I tried once or twice to give some of them a little advice about throwing away their money foolish, and making themselves ridiculous, and, anyway, there wasn't none of the things they give her looked half as nice as the manticure set I got her from Chicago; she told me so one night when I had dropped in to see if she could lend me a dictionary, being as how I was engaged in preparing a little surprise for her in the way of a poem. It was a mighty good one too; it went like this:

Oh lady fair with eyes so blue,
  Your lips are red as roses;
Your cheeks are fresh as the morning
    dew,
  And gosh! how cute your nose is.

Your—and right there is where I needed the dictionary. I didn't know how to spell complexion. And that just goes to show how things happen. Now if I had of been a scholar I wouldn't of had to go down there to use the dictionary, although the chances are I would of rid past once or twice before I went to bed, just for a little exercise.

Anyway, she told me how nice the manticure set was, and so on, and we got real friendly, and then she told me something else. It seems she wanted a sewing machine to make some clothes on, and the nearest place she could get one was Boise, and that was about eighty miles away and she didn't see how she was going to manage. Well, of course I jumps up and I says, "Sadie, where you going to stand it?" and she says,

"Why, what do you mean?" and I says, "Why, I mean if you really want a sewing machine, I'll see that you get one. You just leave it to me." Well, we talked a while longer and I was thinking it was time to go, when I heard a noise outside. The door was open and I got out on the porch in time to see three or four fellows beating it up the street. I couldn't see who they were, but I decided they was some of the bunch that had come down to visit Sadie and when they saw me there they changed their minds. On my way home I figured I'd go to Boise the next day, get the sewing machine, tie it on the horse, behind me, some way and get back here the following night.

First thing next morning, I went down and saw Archie, the foreman, and told him I had to go to Boise to see a doctor on account of my eyes being so bad. He looked at me kind of queer and he says, "I guess I might as well call it a holiday for the rest of the week from the looks of things." I thought he meant that me being the best man he had, he wouldn't be able to do much while I was away, and I didn't find out till later what it was he really meant.

Well, I started out about six o'clock, and in an hour or so I was almost to the big hill about nine miles from here. I swung the pony into a lope and settled down for a hard ride. There was some fellow away ahead of me that was certainly pounding along in good shape, and off to the north there was another chap going like he was scared of something. About noon I come up on them quite a bit, and who do you suppose it was but Billy Jackson and Tom Walters. They stopped to eat and I joined them. I couldn't imagine where they was headed for and they wouldn't tell me. They was even suspicious of each other, and we kept looking grouchy like, all the time we was eating.

I told them about my eyes, and they haw-hawed till I thought they'd bust. I didn't know what the joke was and I didn't care much, because I was thinking all the time how surprised they would be when I got back with my sewing machine, and how Sadie would be so tickled she might even want to marry me. We started off together, me expecting all the time for them to turn and go back or say something, because by this time we was quite a ways from home, and they ought to of been getting back to work.

After awhile they told me they was off for a few days to celebrate Billy's birthday, and that they was going to Boise to do the trick. Well, I thought it funny they hadn't said nothing about it before, but I didn't care, because they wouldn't be hanging around Sadie, anyway.

We stopped about five o'clock to water the horses, and we was sitting down having a smoke when I heard somebody shout, and here's three fellows coming up out of a gully about a quarter of a mile north of us, and say, it was Charley Mattson, Steve Burby and Joe Blake. They looked some surprised when they recognized us and after they had fixed their horses, they come over and sat down with us. They must of rid like the very dickens, or else started a whole lot earlier than we did and I couldn't think what they was going to Boise for. We was only about ten miles from the city then. Well, they told me: Steve was going to have a tooth pulled, and Joe's horse had stepped on his foot, Joe's foot, I mean, the night before: Charley Matt-

son said there wasn't nothing the matter with him, bu seeing as how all the rest of the outfit was going to Boise, why, he just naturally got sort of lonesome and come along too.

It was quite a bunch of invalids thtat rode into town an hour or so later, and as some of the fellows was feeling a little weak from the long ride, we headed for Johnnie Heffron's and lined up to the mahogany. I left as soon as I could because I had to go and buy my sewing machine and put it some place where I could get it early next morning, as I figured on getting a early start. I had to stay sober too, for I knew it wouldn't be no easy job to balance that thing on the back of a skittish horse all next day.

Well, I bought the machine, a dandy, too; one of them kind that fold up, you know. The upstairs part drops down into the basement and then the roof comes over and shuts down. It set me back fifty-eight dollars, but it was some sewing machine, all right.

I didn't see nothing of the rest of the boys that night, and I got me a room and went to bed early. The cookee called me about daylight, and I hustled through breakfast and got my horse out and loaded the sewing machine on him. It was a great big job too, and I finally had to get some ropes and tie them around my shoulders, but after monkeying with it for half an hour, I got started.

When I got to the outskirts of the city, why, I begun to see things. First Billy Jackson some tearing along, and what do you suppose he had with him? A sewing machine. A couple of blocks east, I makes out Steve Burby hitting it up as though he was in a hurry, and tied on to the back of his horse was a—ye-ap—a sewing machine. Then the three others hove into sight and every mother's son of them had a sewing machine fastened to him some way. Then I commenced to get all lit up. The hounds must of been sitting out on the porch while I was in talking to Sadie, and they had heard everything we said, and then each one of them must of got together with himself and decided to beat me to it. Well, that made me pretty sore and I got busy with the quirt. I made up my mind I'd give them a run for their money, anyway, and they would have to go some if they got there ahead of me.

Say, did you ever ride eighty miles across the landscape with a sewing machine tied around your neck? No? Well, you try it some time when you're feeling *ong wee,* and then come over and see me again, and we'll compare notes. It was some ride. Whenever I'd get close enough to Blake, I'd holler and ask him how his foot was getting along, and he'd yell back and ask me where was my glasses. Then Charley Mattson's cargo shifted, and he had to stop and tie it up, and we all rid past real friendly and give him the laugh. He caught up to us after a while, though; he had a big bay mare, and if he'd been at all handy about tying himself up to the sewing machine, he'd of beat us hands down, but he had to stop every few miles and fix himself. We had a mighty good lot of nags and we hung together. It was as pretty a race as you'd want to see. We stopped at Bailey's creek to breath the horses and get a bite to eat, but there wasn't no conversation that you could notice. Tommy Walters got up to get a drink and the rest of us thought he was trying to give us the slip so we all jumped up and lit out.

Well, we got back here about eight o'clock. I was some thirty rods ahead of the bunch. Somebody yelled at me as I passed the first house, but I was too busy to stop and chat with them, and I made a bee line for the boarding house. There was nobody in sight and I tumbled off and unfastened the machine and lugged it up to the front porch and set it down. I just had time to knock at the door when the rest of the fellows rid up and started unpacking. The door opens and who do you suppose I see but our friend Sim Ya, standing there with his hands in his sleeves and grinning at us. I told him I wanted to see Miss Bartlett and he grinned some more. "Him glon," he says. "Gone! Where?" says I. "Him glon away with bloss Archie, get mallee, I lun bloding house now."

I sat down on the stoop kind of heavy like, and the rest of the crowd come up to hear what was going on. Sim told his story over again for their benefit. Nobody said nothing for a few minutes and then Joe looked at me and grinned, and we shook hands all around.

I wasn't feeling very good and after getting something to eat, I took my sewing machine down to the tool house and hid it away. I didn't have no hard feelings against Archie; he was a mighty good fellow. Only I thought he might of told us something about it. However, I'm not the one to let anyhing like that eat me up, so a couple of days after, when the new foreman come, I got Archie's address, and packed up the machine and sent it to them as a wedding present, the first chance I had.

I went down to Boise for Christmas some months later, and pretty near the first person I bumped into was Archie. When he saw me he come over and shook hands with me, and I asked him how he was getting along, and he says "Fine, and I want to thank you boys for remembering us; we certainly appreciate them."

"Whaddymean—them?" I asks.

"Why, don't you know?" he says, sort of surprised. "The sewing machines—we got six of them from the A. B. ranch about a week after we were married."

RAISING THE RENT

"If you can supply me with two rooms I'll give you ten pounds a week."

"You're too late; a gentleman's promised to marry me for them two rooms." —*London "Blighty"*

The $5,000.00 BLACK CAT Prize Story Contest Conditions will be announced in the January number.

Before the "Amen"

By CHARLES F. OURSLER

IT was not grief at the death of his wife that made old Gregory Mack pace restlessly through the three rooms he called his home, stopping every now and then to stare at the plain black coffin and the candles in the parlor. It was not grief that made him morose and mean and muttering; that made his soul peer out of his shriveled old body under bleared lids, and snarl and snap; that made him finger a rotten old pipe in his pocket and heave whispered curses. It was not grief.

All morning he had paced the floor; all morning he had been muttering; all morning he had fingered his pipe. Women moved silently back and forth in his little rooms, afraid of the old fellow and wondering what he was thinking about. At length he had the bed chamber all to himself, and stood staring abjectly at the squat wooden bed in the corner.

"Charity," he snarled, as he kicked a pillow resentfully, "I call that charity—come and take the last cent a man's got to pay the expenses. Come with a smirk and a pityin' face and say. 'Poor man, oh dear, oh dear, and how much have you got, now? Well, then give it to us here, and we'll add enough to it to bury your woman.' Bats! Vultures! Death scorpions! Not leave a poor old man a penny for his pipe."

He shuffled to the door and peered down the steps. Perhaps—in the street, in the gutter, under a box, he might—Enough! He hobbled down, pausing every moment or so to rest, but with his eyes ever on the oblong light at the bottom. The rattle and clattering and clanging of the street did not affright him. He moved slowly down the sidewalk, his gaze downward.

But the District Street Cleaning Commissioner of these late, these hard years, must have been in league with the charity workers. Clean, clean, everywhere; clean asphalt streets, clean brick pavements. The men in white had done their work well. Old Gregory Mack peered on behind posts, in corners, and under boxes, but to no avail.

As he crept on, the noise about him increased; the confusion grew greater, the crowds more pressing. Boys ran by him, pretty girls avoided him, young men jostled him, old men ignored him, as he trudged slowly forward, his eyes slanting downward to the curb. And still his long bony fingers crackled and twined lovingly, feverishly, around his pipe. And still he muttered.

It was after he had gone a great way, and his worn-out legs were trembling and tired, that he spied an empty box before a shop window. It was an oasis: a landing with a chair to boot, interrupting an interminable flight of stairs that led to nowhere. Old Gregory Mack stumbled his way through the crowd and sat down.

His battered black hat pulled over his eyes like a mask, he shrank from the gaze of the crowd and turned to examine the shop window. It was a jeweler's

store, one of that class in which second-hand things, old coins and curios and such, was the principal stock. A large sign was at the back of the window on which, printed in big black letters, Gregory read: "Highest Prices Paid for False teeth."

Old Gregory Mack stroked his chin and stared; then straightened up and started on his way back. The way was not weary and the old man did not gaze downward, but limped on, his eyes burning bright enough to blaze a trail home.

At his door he saw a hearse and a mud-bespattered rickety coach. The first was for his wife, he knew; the second for himself, he supposed. He snarled inward oaths as he reflected that the "charity ones" were even then busying themselves in his affairs in his home up the steps. With no respectful quiet, then, did he climb the stairs. He planked his old feet heavily at every step.

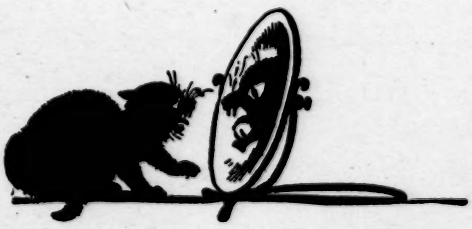
There was a crowd in the parlor; something Old Gregory resented. Idlers, and street urchins, and dirty neighbors—women were glancing from the two prim settlement workers, sitting calmly near the coffin, to the dainty and demure clergyman who was saying something over his glasses.

Gregory poked his head in the door and grinned. This was the funeral, eh? The grin faded into a scowl, as he surveyed the "charity ones." And as the old man scowled, every head was bowed while the clergyman offered prayer.

The opportunity! As the saccharine tones of the preacher rose and fell in an abjuration he had composed at college, the old fellow tiptoed across the floor to the coffin. All eyes were closed, except those of a group of dirty children, too frightened to do anything but stare.

Old Gregory bent trembling over the death box, patting each cold bony cheek of the thing within. He bent forward and placed his own face close down to it. One of the "charity ones" said afterward she remembered hearing a croaking, rattling sound, and a sob as if of joy.

As the sweet clergyman whispered "Amen," the door closed behind Gregory Mack, and he was gone.



Little Dog Puts One Over

By FREDERICK J. JACKSON

"This hermit man came into town;
He knew no better than
To eat at Mrs. Dunnigan's,
This *dawg-gone* hermit man."

THUS sang the two Smiths—Big Dog and Little Dog. It was the twenty-eighth verse of their private song, and they had just composed it as they rode along the dusty road a mile out of Tres Pecos. They were inspired by experience. Not an hour since, they had shown the same poor judgment that the hermit had displayed; they had thought to patronize Mrs. Dunnigan, had even climbed upon stools in her restaurant and leaned their elbows upon the counter. But Mrs. Dunnigan had laid down a barrage of crockery and hot beans that had driven them to the street. Why she had done this is another story. Suffice it to say that she did not seem to care for their patronage.

Now, they were still hungry; their appetites had been whetted all the more by their brief stay in Mrs. Dunnigan's restaurant. But in their hasty departure from town they had momentarily forgotten the needs of the inner man.

Six miles out and they met the chuck-wagon of the X-W outfit, which was on roundup. Nearby was the bed-wagon. The remuda grazed a short distance away under the watchful eye of a horse-wrangler.

"Gosh, if it ain't old Loony Luke, what used to dish it up for the Double Arrow!" exclaimed Big Dog, as he caught sight of the cook, who was drying tin plates by the simple process of placing them out in the sun.

"Hello, Loony!" he called out as they rode up. "How's chances?"

"Fine!" responded the cook, grinning with pleasure at their coming. Then he dished out two tin plates of beans, cut numerous thick slices of bread, and placed a pot of coffee on the fire-irons and some wood on the dying fire.

"If you two mavericks want a job you've sure come to the right camp," he announced.

"No thanks, Loony," declined Big Dog, endeavoring to keep a recalcitrant bean from slipping off his knife. "We ain't workin'—yet."

"We still got money," supplemented his partner.

"Huh!" grinned the cook, that's more than you ever had at the Double Arrow. Say, did you hear about the range war? Old Schmidt is sure mixing heavy with the Arrow. And he's got every gunman he could round up on his payroll. He's got the Yucca Kid!" Loony stated this as impressively as though Schmidt had enlisted the services of the entire United States army.

"Bah! That four-flusher!" Big Dog spat his contempt.

"He's one bad hombre, that gazabo is."

Big Dog smiled derisively, while Little Dog spoke up:

"I reckon you never heard of the

three months the Kid had to stay out of the saddle? No? Well, Big Dog had a run-in with him down on the Heela—beat him to the draw by a feather-edge. It'll be my turn next. This loco partner of mine is always tryin' to corral all the fun. And we're travellin' the Double Arrow way. We got a little engagement with those alleged poker players over in La Verde. The coyotes sent us out to look for a job last time we were there."

"Wear all your clothes in La Verde," warned the cook. "That's the Kid's hang-out."

"Say, Loony, don't get any gray hairs about *me*," said Big Dog. "If the Yucca Kid gets too promiscuous I'll just naturally have to bump him off for keeps."

"I ain't gonna have any regrets if you do. The dirty son-of-a-gun is a two-gun man now. Says he hadn't room on one gun for any more notches."

Little Dog finished a pint cup of coffee—range coffee, which had stood on the grounds over night and been boiled up twice that day. Then he stretched luxuriously, began to roll a cigarette and broke into song during the operation.

"This hermit man got drunk one day—
Pity him if you can;
He went and lost his bran' new shirt
This *dawg-gone* hermit man."

Big Dog joined in heavily on the last line, then demanded.

"When did you make up that verse? I never heard it before."

"Oh, I thought of it down in Tucson when you were buzzin' around with that blonde biscuit-shooter."

Big Dog winced. "You mosquito, you, don't rub it in," he warned.

"I ain't," declared the other. "But let's be drifting."

So, after another exchange of reminiscences with the cook, they mounted and passed out of the camp. Before evening they rode into the somnolent hamlet of Cinco Palomas.

"Devil of a place," grumbled Little Dog. "Day and night are the only two things that ever happen here."

"Good place to spend a night," grinned the other. "We can sleep for a change."

As Little Dog removed the saddle from his horse he examined the cantle, where he had nailed two extra straps. One of them was working loose, so, pulling out his six-shooter, he drove the nail back into place, using the butt of the gun for a hammer.

"D—n!" he swore earnestly.

"What's the matter?" inquired his big partner. "I shore grieves to hear you waste profanity."

"Waste nothing! I'd like to think up somethin' special. I done busted the wood of the butt of my six-gun."

"Sho!" spoke the other, examining the Colt, on which one of the walnut grips had split into two pieces.

Later, in Lowbert's store, Little Dog voiced his grief to the proprietor and showed him the damaged gun.

"Looks like glue might fix it," suggested the store man.

"Glue nothing!" snorted Little Dog in disgust. "Think this is a dainty bit of bricker-brack?"

"This is some glue," Lowbert insisted. "I've used it. Take my word for it, it'll mend wood, crockery, iron or a broken heart. This hot climate does wonders; give the glue an hour to dry and it won't be affected by heat, cold, dampness, abuse—or a blonde's disposition, which is the same thing."

At the mention of a blonde Big Dog winced again. Then he grinned.

"Try it, Little Dog. That's some recommend."

"Hope the glue is half as strong," grumbled the bantam, skeptically. "I'll try it, though. Gimme a bottle, Lowbert."

Carefully he coated the mucilage onto the pieces of broken wood, and bound them together with a string.

Big Dog watched the mending with a critical eye, then engaged Lowbert in a game of checkers. Little Dog sat nearby and aroused his partner's ire by suggesting moves to the storekeeper.

An hour later, Lowbert arose from his chair, grimacing. "I don't see how you do it," he declared with lurid embellishments. Then he turned to the victor's partner. "Guess your gun's all right now."

Little Dog unwound the string. Tentatively, with not much faith in Lowbert's highly-touted adhesive, he tested the wood with his fingers. To his surprise it held. Violently he slammed the piece of walnut to the floor. The repaired spot was still intact."

"You win!" he acknowledged, removing a screw to re-fasten the wooden grip to the butt. "It sure is some glue."

Shortly afterwards, the partners retired for the night, spreading their blankets in the hay-loft of Lowbert's stable.

La Verde was distant eight hours ride, and they were planning to be on their way early the following morning. They slept well, ate breakfast, and prepared to start. Before mounting, Little Dog reached into his coat pocket for cigarette material, and discovered that he was carrying the remainder of the large bottle of glue. He started to throw it away, then, on second thought, decided to play safe and keep it for a while. The gunbutt might crack again.

A KILLER was the Yucca Kid, cold-blooded, merciless, with death ready to flash from either hand at the slightest provocation—or without it; as pregnant with death as a side-winder, but without a rattlesnake's honor. The snake, at least, gives warning. Schmidt's vaunted gunman was at heart a treacherous coward, but lightning on the draw. He was proud as a peacock of his bloody record, even of the men he had shot in the back. On his sanguineous escutcheon was only one blot—to his way of thinking, and that one was the time Big Dog Smith had downed him in an even break.

The Messrs. Smith made their entry into La Verde as inconspicuous as possible. Big Dog knew that he could reasonably expect to be potted in the back if the Yucca Kid saw him first.

The dusty, false-facaded main street of the town ran east and west. At the eastern end of the hitching-rail-lined thoroughfare stood a dispensary of liquid barbed-wire known as the First Chance; the Last Chance saloon being located at the other end of town.

As it was the time of day when all men who can do so seek shelter from the desert sun, no one was in sight when the partners cantered around the hill and dismounted in front of the First Chance. The thumb of his right hand hooked with careful carelessness in his gun belt, his fingers resting on the butt of an extremely efficient Colt's .44, Big Dog strolled into the place of entertainment. His partner was at his heels.

The owner of the First Chance, Charlie Maguire, was easily the best-liked man

in La Verde. Therefore, the partners were surprised to note that the saloon was empty, except for Charlie himself who was propped in a chair behind the bar reading a four-day-old Los Angeles newspaper.

"Sweet Geraldine!" said Little Dog. "The place must be quarantined—"

"Or something!" added Big Dog. "Hello, Charlie!"

"Hello, boys," returned Maguire. "Say," anxiously, "did anyone see you come into town?"

"Nary an hombre. Why this solicitude and mournfulness?" inquired Big Dog, grinning.

"Mournfulness! Hell's bells! The Yucca Kid's in town. He blew in last night with five gunmen from Schmidt's. They hung around here, and were pretty decent—for them—until three boys from the Double Arrow showed up. Harry Myers and Windy Larkins stepped in through the door first. Right behind them was Toothpick Bryan. No sooner did the Kid catch sight of Windy and Harry than he reaches down and comes up with both hands smoking. His men join right in, too. Cold-blooded, deliberate murder, that's what it was. Toothpick sees the odds and the game, and shows himself to be a mighty wise galoot.

"His pards were down for keeps—two or three slugs apiece—so Toothpick turns tail, hops onto his cayuse and blows out of town. The whole six of them run out and open up in the dark tryin' to bump off the other Double Arrow man, but their eyes are blinded temporary by their havin' been in the light, so Toothpick gets around the hill all right. I've seen range wars come and I've seen 'em go, but never saw a play come up so raw as that."

"Um-m!" grunted Big Dog, reflectively, as Charlie placed a bottle and two glasses on the bar. "Who's with the Kid?"

"One-Time Shanahan, Carl Hendricks, Dusty Muller and two others that I don't know. Reckon they're from down Texas way—they're both wearin' 'apron chaps.' Anyhow, I'd hate to meet either of them in the dark when he knew I had the price of a drink on me."

"Don't know any of them but the Kid," ruminated Big Dog. "Hey, Little Dog, savvy the brands on 'em?"

"Yeh, we heard something about this One-Time Shanahan down in the Big Bend country. Bad hombre, remember?"

"No, but I guess they all had reasons for leaving where they came from." He turned to Maguire. "All of them with Schmidt's outfit?"

"Sure—that's why they were out to get the Double Arrow men."

"What started the trouble on the range?"

"Quarrel over a water hole that Schmidt claimed and fenced off. I know for a fact that it is inside the Double Arrow boundary."

"The one through Coyote Pass?" Little Dog was all interest.

"That's the one."

"Hey, Big Dog, whatta yuh say we hook up with the Double Arrow?"

"Uh-uh! We still got money."

"Gee, that's so, ain't it? But we can soon remedy that," the little man suggested, hopefully.

"Take my warnin', boys, your lives ain't gonna be worth a thin two-bit piece if the Kid or his bunch know you're in town."

"Oh, I don't know about that for sure," drawled Little Dog softly. Reaching for his gun he critically examined the repaired butt, then suggestively eased the hammer back and forth, and spun the cylinder.

"You're darned shoutin' we don't know!" agreed his partner, likewise making sure of the condition of his shooting iron. He bent down to tie the bottom of his holster a little closer to his leg.

"Where's that private murder squad now?" he demanded, belligerently.

"Down at the Fountain of Youth or the Last Chance," replied the bartender.

"Well, they better step pretty soft or Schmidt will discover that a few of his killers have turned up missing. We're old Double Arrow men; likewise, we sure love trouble."

"We sure do," sighed his diminutive partner, wiping his lips with a dusty sleeve.

Charlie ventured a doubtful smile; still, he picked up hope. He knew Big Dog and Little Dog and they were a byword with him, for their luck, when everything else failed, was nothing short of a miracle. Either of them fully as capable with firearms as the Yucca Kid, in an even break they probably would have an edge. Their reputation for straight and fast shooting was heralded wide. Many a would-be bad-man had come to grief at the hands of this cheerful pair.

What worried Maguire, however, was this: Would the Yucca Kid and his men give the Smiths an even break? He doubted it. The hired desperadoes of the Schmidt outfit would not let the Yucca Kid fight it out alone with Big Dog if the old enemies met. The friendly saloon man knew the inevitable end of such an uneven fight. Therefore he endeavored to dissuade the happy-go-lucky, trouble-loving cowboys from seeking a gun fight that was certain to end disastrously.

"Good idea!" commented Little Dog, after listening patiently to Maguire's missionary efforts. He began to roll a cigarette, and, when he returned the papers and muslin bag to his pocket, his eyes were bright with a gleam of deviltry. He struck a match.

"Good idea!" he repeated, emphatically. "I sure like it, for I ain't aimin' none whatever to rest in pieces. Big Dog, you fighting old hound you, just keep a tight rein and squat here till I get back? Understand? None of the Schmidt bunch —not even the Kid—knows me, and I'll do a little scouting. Then we'll know how to go about it when we get ready to start the picnic. No matter how long I stay away don't get worried—as long as you don't hear any shootin'."

"Guess you're right, Little Dog," agreed the big man, with the usual harmony that prevailed between them in emergencies. "You conceited little runt you, don't you go and stick your freckled snoot into trouble without me being along," he warned.

"Nary a trouble. Just to prove it, here goes—" Little Dog removed his gun belt and deposited it on the bar. "Does that suit you?"

"It sure does! But don't open that trouble-startin' mouth of yours too wide."

"I'll be a reg'lar lamb," his partner promised.

Through the doorway Big Dog watched the little man walk out to his horse, hang his coat on the saddle horn,

then start to mount. At this point, however, Little Dog changed his mind, and walked, with a bow-legged strut, down the street until he finally disappeared into the Fountain of Youth.

From the conversation of the six men lined up at the bar as he entered, Little Dog gathered that they had just partaken of a meal, after sleeping until long after the noon hour. All of them were sober and in fairly good humor; as yet they had not partaken of enough liquor to put them into fighting, surly moods. It was only through force of habit that one of them dropped his hand to his gun as Little Dog's shadow darkened the doorway. But after sizing up the unarmed newcomer the apprehensive one turned again to the bar, supreme contempt in his manner.

Little Dog noted this and grinned inwardly. His size, too small to be worthy of notice, and his harmless, meek appearance had been an asset to him many times in the past. So it was now.

"Have a drink, gents?" he called out with an air of timidness, as he sidled in.

"Them's welcome words," said the Yucca Kid, whose funds had run low.

"Set 'em up for the outfit," Little Dog instructed the bartender.

His left hand in his trousers pocket, Little Dog lined up alongside the Yucca Kid, who stood nearest the door.

While seven elbows crooked in unison, Little Dog's left hand hovered suspiciously near the gun holster on the Kid's right thigh.

"All right!" he whooped, after the glasses had been replaced on the bar. "Set 'em up again!" Stepping around between the Kid and One-Time Shanahan, he remarked to the latter. "You're drinking this time with me, stranger?"

"Shore!" was the enthusiastic reply. Shanahan had spent his last dollar. This state of finances might have caused some men to hesitate, but Shanahan was not burdened with any nice notions of standing a return treat.

Again Little Dog's left hand hovered in proximity of a gun holster—two of them, in fact, for he created an opportunity by turning his back to the bar and his left side to the Kid and singing:

"Oh, out from old Missouri
I set me forth to roam
Indicted by a jury
For stealin' hawgs from home . . .

"Once more we licker up," he shouted, breaking off the song and moving up between One-Time Shanahan and Carl Hendricks.

Thus Little Dog made himself popular with the enemy, making his way along the bar and stopping to get acquainted with each man as he ordered another round of drinks. Nor would he allow anyone to treat him in return. He was firm in this, and the gunmen were only too glad to allow him to indulge his whim. Incidentally, Little Dog drank as little as he could. Several times he managed to drop his liquor into the sand on the floor.

Six times he paid for the drinks; by then, to the casual eye—nay, even to a keen observer—he appeared to be more than slightly intoxicated. He brought sorrow to the bartender by the way he scratched the top of the bar with a spur when he threw one foot over the woodwork in an effort to climb upon it. Then he fell back into the sand.

"Golly, but that bronc' sure does buck," he remarked whimsically. "Blindfold her till I gets both feet in the stirrups."

Six bad men rocked back and forth and slapped their knees in delight. "Ain't he a card?" they chuckled. "And only six drinks, too!"

Two of them finally assisted him to climb onto the bar. From this post of vantage he loudly declaimed himself to be the "champeen" troubadour of the West, and proceeded to prove it. His original songs anent the dubious ladies of mining towns are unprintable. "Annie Rooney," however, made the biggest hit. Three times did they clamor for him to repeat it, for it was new to them.

An impressive silence followed this. Waiting perhaps ten seconds, Little Dog gave them this bit of philosophy:

"The day shines gold with no hint of sorrow,
And I don't give a d—n if I die tomorrow!"

Following this he scrambled down from the bar. "S'long, boys," he said, "I gotta go now."

"Coming back?" they chorused.

Little Dog continued in his stagger towards the doorway. "You couldn't keep me away very long," he called back over his shoulder.

BIG DOG was growing nervous as he waited in the First Chance saloon. "Confound his ornery little hide," he grumbled to Maguire. "Here he's been gone an hour and a half. I'm getting worried. The devil of it is that I don't dare to go and look for him. He's got something up his sleeve, and I'll never hear the last of it if I botch it for him."

"Suppose I take a walk down the street and look for him?" suggested the saloon man. "I'm beginning to wonder, too."

"I wish you would," said Big Dog. "I love the little cuss, but he's worse than a hornet in my ear if I show up at the wrong time after he's told me to stay hobbled."

Maguire came from behind the bar and made his way to the door.

"Here he comes now," he announced, "and he's lit up like a Piute."

Big Dog walked over to the entrance. "Dog-gone it," he complained, catching sight of his partner, who was lurching, zigzag, towards the First Chance, "they've poured the red-eye into him. I can't savvy his drinking with that bunch of murderers."

Little Dog approached. Erratically traveling sideways like a crab he came to the steps leading into the First Chance. stumbled up them and stood swaying just inside the doorway.

"I leave it to you, Big Dog," he hiccoughed, "ain't I got a beaut?" His eyes were half closed, with a gleam in them as though he were masking some emotion.

"I reckon you have, old-timer," Big Dog admitted, sorrowfully. "You gummed up the game, for you're sure drunk!"

"Whoops!" Little Dog straightened up; his eyes, filled with unholy joy at having slipped one over on his partner, opened wide. "You got another reckon coming. Ain't I some little actoreen, though? Huh?"

"You little devil!" ejaculated the other. "Where have you been for the last couple of hours?"

"Oh, just scouting around," was the casual assurance, as he buckled on his gun belt. "Be sure your six-gun is all right, and come with me. I got you an invite to a soiree. But you've gotta leave the Kid to me; let me take care of

him. That's the only stipulation. Etiquette, savvy?" He led the way to the street, and Big Dog followed, wondering at the overload of confidence carried by his small friend.

Down the street they made their way, towards the Fountain of Youth. Behind them stood Maguire, scratching his head.

"Darn it all," muttered the saloon man. "Got a notion to get out my old ten-gauge and horn in on the melee."

In front of the saloon from where the voices of the Yucca Kid and his followers drifted out, Little Dog stooped to listen. Then he drew his gun and motioned for his partner to follow.

"Elevate your paws!" he shouted, leaping through the doorway. "Stick 'em—"

Bang! Smilingly, he shot the Yucca Kid through the heart as the latter endeavored to jerk out his guns.

"Hoist your digits!" he ordered again, menacing the others with his Colt.

Only one other man besides the Kid had reached for a weapon, one of the apron-chapped Texans. Big Dog pulled down on him, but for some reason momentarily withheld fire. The gentleman from Texas hastily changed his mind, just as the hammer was slipping from beneath Big Dog's thumb. His hands followed those of his four friends who were reaching for the ceiling.

"Cut loose if they get any funny notions," instructed Little Dog, slipping his gun into the left hand of his big partner, and started forward.

"Hog-tie it! You might as well tell me to eat when I'm hungry," was the retort.

Two minutes later the five gunmen, sans guns and belts, were lined against the opposite wall. The weapons lay along the bar, where they had fallen when Little Dog unbuckled the belts.

"Suppose I drive this bunch of goats up to the First Chance?" said Big Dog.

"Good idea," agreed the the other. "Only they ain't goats. Last night they were posing as wolves; now they're sheep—and, God, how I hate sheep!" Little Dog began to gather up the fallen belts and guns, including those from the person of the Yucca Kid, after he had cut the belt.

A never-to-be-forgotten event in the history of La Verde was the parade that progressed from the Fountain of Youth to the First Chance.

Out in the street, Little Dog, almost hidden beneath the extra six belts and seven guns that he had draped around himself, ordered the prisoners to halt.

"Get down on your knees—all of you!" he commanded, and they obeyed, under the menace of his gun.

"That's right; make 'em pray," said Big Dog, grinning at the townsmen who were beginning to assemble from all quarters of La Verde.

"Pray, nothing! They've got to *crawl!*"

Big Dog uttered a yelp of joy. In the experience of this pair, they had found no more subtle method of stripping a bad man from his reputation than by dispossessing him of his last vestige of dignity.

"That's right," he agreed, "make 'em crawl."

"Hanged if I will!" spluttered the Texan, the one who had attempted to draw his gun.

"You may be hanged, anyway," Big Dog sweetly assured him. He passed his Colt to his partner, then turned again

to the Texan. "Are you going to crawl?"

"No!"

Flop! Big Dog's ham-like fist caused the stubborn one to land in the dust on one ear.

"Are you going to crawl?"

"Yes," said the Texan, and forthwith, on hands and knees, bagan to make his way towards the First Chance.

"Any of you other birds think you're too good to crawl," threateningly demanded Big Dog.

None of them did.

Thus was La Verde highly entertained, for it was well over two hundred yards to the First Chance, and nowhere was the dust less than three inches deep. Even the local laundryman grinned happily. The Schmidt outfit had hilariously smashed all his windows the night before.

The private poker room of the First Chance had one door and no windows. Scant ventilation was afforded by two small holes near the ceiling, which opened into the barroom. The door was stout; therefore this room ideally served the purpose for which the Smiths proposed to use it: a temporary prison for their captives.

Again was the First Chance filled with a convivial assemblage, and much-toasted were the two who had caused the downfall of the delegation from the much-hated and feared Schmidt rancho.

A shrill whistle sounded without. Simultaneously were five windows in the First Chance smashed by rifle barrels being thrust through the glass. Sunburned, grim, purposeful faces were behind the guns. Four cowboys, Colts in hand, crowded in through the front door. Two more entered from the rear.

The Smiths started to reach for their guns, then changed their minds and calmly downed the drinks that had just been placed before them.

The invaders were men from the Double Arrow.

"Hello, Mullaney," Little Dog called out. "You seem to be lookin' for something."

"Hello, yuh little rubber band," responded Mullaney. "If you know what we want, where are they?"

"I can't say for sure where the Yucca Kid went, but can make a right good guess. I bumped him off. How'd you happen to drift in here with so much earnestness?"

"Toothpick Bryan managed to get home to-day. He just did, and that's about all, for he fell from his horse as he pulled up. Shot bad through the shoulder, and half-delirious. We managed to get the story from him, and then hustled down here with every man, except the cook, to pull off a little private justice. Where are the others?"

Big Dog pointed to the poker room.

"In there, eh? Well, I reckon we'll have those murderers hanged kite-high by sundown."

"I reckon not," demurred Little Dog. "Far be it from us to dictate ethics, but we ain't murderers; and your men ain't, either. Schmidt doesn't own the courts of this county, and we've got a dozen witnesses here who saw the killing last night. It's fifteen years—if not worse—in Yuma for these coyotes, and I think you'll agree that plain lynching would be too easy compared with the sweltering hell of Yuma penitentiary."

"Mebbe you're right," said Mullaney, doubtfully, "but the Kid is a rustler, as well as a killer. When he was caught

using a running iron he shot Happy Weeks. We found Happy out on the range yesterday. He was dead, but had managed to write on the rocks, 'The Kid did it. He's a—' That was all. He had printed that out with his finger, and *with his own blood!* We pieced the story together from that. A dead cow, ashes of a fire, marks on the ground where he had roped and branded the calf! And he killed Happy. Do you wonder we came down here to polish off the bunch!"

"Remember that I bumped off the Kid," Little Dog reminded him. "That ought to square things a little."

"How many men in your outfit now?" interjected Big Dog.

"Eleven good ones, one cripple and one cook. The cook is a cripple, too—in the haid," replied the foreman.

"Huh! How many has Schmidt?"

"As near as I can figure, he had about twenty-five when we had sixteen."

"Which leaves him nineteen to your eleven—or twelve, with the foreman. We may be wanting to drop our war bags in your bunkhouse some of these days."

"I'll do all but kiss you in welcome," said Mullaney. "By the way, how many of you did it take to round up the Kid's gang?"

"Two," answered Little Dog, swelling visibly, "and I could have done it alone."

"Sure you could," agreed Big Dog, winking at the foreman.

"You must have used strategy," continued Mullaney, smiling.

"Come again." Little Dog was puzzled at the word.

"Strategy."

"Oh! I thought that's what you said. I didn't have none of that with me, so I used glue. Poured a little into each holster when I was drinkin' with the Kid's gang. Look at those guns,"—he pointed to the trophies on the bar—"every one stuck so you can't pull it out."

"What?" gasped Big Dog.

"It's *some* glue!" quoted the little man his face aglow with an ungodly grin, "It'll mend wood, iron, leather, crockery or a broken heart. Give it an hour to dry and it won't—"

"That'll be all!" protested Big Dog, shutting off his partner's peroration by tossing him up onto the bar. "Any more glue in the bottle?"

"A little."

"Give me the bottle."

Little Dog surrendered the glue, and curiously watched his big partner empty it onto the bar.

Big Dog by this time was slightly under the influence, therefore was humorously whimsical. Catching Little Dog by the hips, he proceeded to seat him in the glue.

"Now," he said, "I'm going to hold you there for an hour—just to pay you for holding out on me. It'll give you a chance to sing. Gentlemen," he announced, raising his voice, "the nightingale of the desert has consented to entertain you all evening. I'm to buy his drinks and a new pair of chaps and pants to-morrow."

"Fair enough," said Little Dog, "providing you buy all that for me. But, golly," he voiced as an afterthought, "suppose this glue soaks through!"

The $5,000.00 BLACK CAT Prize Story Contest Conditions will be announced in the January number.

The Cutover

By EUGENE LAMAR

THE cable helper kicked irritably at the little lizard-like water dog that was investigating his feet and sent it scurrying noiselessly with a score of its kind, back into the darker recesses of the manhole. The helper was seated on a rough box in the bottom of the hole with a test receiver strapped over his ear, waiting the call from his chief, the cableman.

On either side swung the big telephone cables, curved sinuously around the contour of the hole, as if so many slimy reptiles had paused in their crawling through the subterranean passages. A sepulchral quiet pervaded the underground, disturbed only by the continual drip, drip of seepy water, and the low rumble of traffic in the street.

"Hello, Jim! Hello!" the words, abrupt in the little receiver, startled him into activity. His chief was calling.

"All right!" and he clapped the receiver quickly back to his ear for instruction.

"Put your test wire on the white," called the faint metallic voice, "and don't go to sleep on this job again to-night, or you'll lose it, like you did that girl."

The helper winced a bit and swore softly, as he ran his fingers over the stubby ends of the little copper wires of the newly installed cable. They were bared where the sheath had been stripped back for test and splicing. Each pair of wires was spiralled together through the long cable to the telephone exchange, insulated with their wrappings of tissue paper—red and white on alternate ones.

He connected the two dry-cell batteries that were swinging from a string before him, to the "white" wire of the pair his test set was "on."

"O. K.," he shouted into the receiver, his voice echoing harshly back into his ears from the close brick walls. Then he listened closely.

"Put them in the test board as I call their numbers."

Then began the routine of testing and assigning numbers for each of the six hundred pair of wires, so they might be spliced to the wires of another cable.

The helper used a small pair of snips, the handles of which were wired to his test set, for "putting battery" on the cable pairs for testing. It was his work to answer, "O. K.," as the cableman in the central office called each pair, and poke the wires through the numbered holes in a small board he held.

They were working over-time that night, finishing up the last splices for the cutover, which would put the new Walnut Exchange in operation at midnight. With their work finished, the cutover would consist merely of throwing in the main battery fuse at the new switchboard and pulling out the line coils at the old board down town. Hundreds of telephone lines would be transferred in the twinkling of an eye—if every man's work had been well done.

The monotony of the testing wore on,

and despite his chief's half jocular warning, the helper was again working absent mindedly—"asleep on the job." He was thinking of the girl, the operator. He wondered if she would be on duty at the new exchange that night, when they cut it into service.

A year before, they had met in the little village nearby, where he and the cableman had gone to clear some "aerial trouble." The helper had laughed good-naturedly at the little single-position switchboard she alone presided over, and told her fascinating stories of the big city exchanges, with scores of operators busy at long stately rows of switchboards. When he had gone back to the city, they wrote foolish love letters, and on Sundays, after pay days, he would go out to the village to visit her.

These visits were to her unsophisticated mind, colorful glimpses of magic city life. She grew discontented with the monotony of the sleepy village and longed to feel the thrill and be part of the throbbing city, as she imagined it—and be nearer him. So she came to the city one day in early spring, alone and unknown to the helper, for it was to be a surprise to him.

He was a very puzzled chap, as he came in response to her call that afternoon.

"I just wanted you to help me find a boarding house," she gaily announced, to add to his amazement.

"Find—find what?"

"A boarding house. I have just begun work here in the Mabry Exchange," she explained. "I know I am going to like it, Jim. It's just grand. I can hardly wait till morning to begin again. Aren't you glad?"

Somehow, he was glad, for her confidence was infectious. And the two, filled with the spirit of youth and happiness, lived for the future.

Together, they spent the evenings and Sundays she was off duty, happy, because the world was young. Many a tired business man was cheered by the joy-note in Helen's voice over his telephone throughout the day.

The helper was lighthearted and began to think and plan for the future, when he would be promoted; for now it meant a great deal to them.

Then—enter the clerk; sleek, well-dressed and smooth-handed. How he and Helen met, the helper never knew; for, as ever so, his advent quickly silenced the sweet exchange of confidence between the lovers.

The clerk could entertain better, do the little inconsequential things with a greater nicety than could the blunt helper. And the girl was fascinated by his agreeable manners.

Before, she had thought a trolley ride or a movie party with Jim, the height of metropolitan luxury. But now, with the clerk, it was taxicabs, real shows, and little late bites to eat before going home. She may not have forgotten the lowly helper, but there were a lot of things to occupy her mind; so many things, she had never dreamed of before.

The helper must have known this, for he still loved the girl. Though that may have been because love sometimes laughs at wills as well as at locksmiths.

But his thoughts were bitter, as the events of the old year came to mind in retrospection, while he sat there solitary, in the manhole, mechanically hurrying his work to a finish, 'ere the birth of the New Year—and the cutover at twelve o'clock.

When the last wire was tested, the helper called, "All done," and listened.

Came the voice of the chief: "Wrap up the splices; I won't have time to solder them now. You'll have to stay there in the hole to-night and clear the new trunk cable when they make the cutover."

"Me!" stammered the helper.

"Yes, you. There's a big fire down town and every man on the job has been pulled off to repair the burnt cables—just you and me left to pull this thing to-night. We gotta make good."

"Yes, sir, we have," echoed the reply; he strived to appear confident.

"Spring your cable out where you can get to it when the time comes," his chief was directing. "It's eleven-five now. Haven't got a watch, have you?"

"No, sir."

"Well, listen for the New Year whistles; they'll begin blowing at exactly twelve. When you hear 'em, saw the old cable off and don't be a second late or hell 'll be to pay."

Then the receiver was quiet and the helper began preparing for the night's work. Here in the junction manhole, where the conduits from the new Walnut Exchange joined those leading to all parts of the city, was the inter-office trunk line cable, connecting with all the other exchanges. It would be the life-giving artery, through which the pulsing stream of telephone calls would flow unceasingly, to and from the new exchange—after the cutover.

But just at midnight, when the Central office installers were throwing in the battery fuse, some one must be in the underground and saw off the section of the cable made dead by the cutover; clearing the new trunk wires for the avalanche of calls sure to stream through them, when the New Year whistles woke up the city.

It was a simple thing—just cut down through the soft copper wires with a hack-saw, clear the wire ends, and do it promptly. But the chance of cutting the wrong cable, balling something up, unnerved the helper. Responsibility rested ill on his unaccustomed shoulders. He wondered if he were going to make good. He nervously arranged the tools again, and sat down on the box in the bottom of the hole, for the solitary wait. It was very quiet, except for the trickling of sewer water. The streets were deserted. Every one had gone either to bed or down town to usher in the New Year.

To pass away the time more quickly, the helper removed the paraffined wrapping from a cable splice recently made and ran his receiver clips over the loose bunched wires, listening idly to the scraps of conversation flying here and there, from telephone to telephone. By accident, he came across one of the inter-office trunk circuits, in use between two of the old exchanges. It seemed fairly to throb with the constant stream of calls the busy operator crowded over it. The helper grew interested. From every station in life the messages came pouring hot, one close after the other, over the common trunk wire. And only a thoughtless chap there to listen to what would have been the delight of a philosopher!

First, a happy care-free greeting; then a last word of sad parting; now the excited cry of disaster, and a note of human despair; all the gamut it ran, up and down the life scale.

A voice, suave, calling the familiar number of the telephone at Helen's boarding house, startled the listener's flagging interest. It was the clerk!

"Hello, girlie!" he greeted her.

And the helper kicked a bucket of paraffin across the manhole.

She laughed a little joyful gurgle in reply.

"I've just learned that the cutover will be postponed on account of New Year's," the clerk was saying to her, "and since the operators will not be needed for extra duty to-night, we are inviting some of them to a little supper down town—all proper and chaperoned, you know. I'll be out after you in a jiffy," he continued.

"Oh, that will be fine!" she cried; "I'll be ready. I was just starting for the exchange."

"Be sweet till I get there," he called, as he hung up.

The listening helper was puzzled as well as angry.

The cutover was postponed, and he left sitting there to cut the cable, with everybody going off to supper.

"It's funny, damned funny," he said to himself doubtfully.

Presently the clerk's voice came on again. Evidently he had immediately "flashed his hook" and held the same wire. He called a number and the helper strained the receiver to his ear.

"She fell for it," the clerk was telling some one. "We'll be down town in a taxi in a mighty few minutes. Drop around to the wine room at Josie's and I'll show her to you. She's some swell little dame."

"How are you going to get by with it?" the other fellow was asking.

"Oh, I'll—tell her the others are delayed, or anything, till I can get her to take a little drink or two; then she won't care—maybe. And we'll all have a jolly little New Year's feed."

"Good luck then," the other laughed. "I'll drop around." Up went the receivers.

The helper sat stunned with surprise, staring vacantly at the incandescent hanging before him. The clerk had been lying and the cutover was not going to be postponed after all.

But Helen; he remembered bitterly her joyous acceptance of the invitation to the supper.

"Maybe she'll be surprised, too, in a little while. It's none of my business any more," he reasoned. "I ain't got time to worry about other people's troubles—not with this cutover coming on." He was talking to himself there in the manhole. But he could not dismiss the thought of the impending danger into which she was blindly going. He was not so conscious now of his outraged love, as of his concern for her safety.

"I wish she hadn't thrown me over," he added whimsically, and a sort of lump came up in his throat as he remembered their old love days.

"By God, I've got to stop this thing!" he cried, starting up.

He climbed hurriedly out of the manhole, took a quick look around, and seeing no one to detect him, ran toward the corner drug store.

He must get to a telephone and warn her. Even then she might not believe him. He hurriedly called the number and his hopes sank when some one said she had just gone out.

The drug store showed thirty-five minutes after eleven as he came out of the

booth. He must get back to his post. He wondered where she was now, and felt the flush that was hidden under the grime on his face.

An inspiration flashed into his mind as he stood on the sidewalk.

"Kid, how quick can you get me down town on that thing?" he asked the messenger who was tinkering with his motorcycle.

"Oh, fifteen minutes. Where do you want to go?" was the reply.

"On North Street," he faltered, and felt like slapping the grinning boy. "Get me there in ten minutes and I'll give you this dollar," he said briskly.

"You're on." And he was.

Away they went. He never remembered much of that ride. It reminded him of the time he got eleven hundred volts from a hot wire—a black streak, the jerks, some flashing lights—and the pavement of North Street was flying under them.

"Stop here," he gasped.

The motorcycle careened up to the curb, coming to a stop just as a taxicab was driving away from the entrance to a building. Glancing at a name plate on the door, he pushed it open and entered.

No one was in sight, but as he hurried back toward the lights, he saw something that quickened his racing pulses. It was the clerk; he stepped out into the corridor and stood looking squarely at the advancing helper, in whom he must have recognized something of primitive danger, for he wheeled and walked quickly toward the rear.

The helper pushed open the door to the cloak room and stood there, looking at Helen, who was removing her hat before a mirror.

She saw his reflection and turned in astonishment.

"Why, Jim, you haven't come to supper, have you?"

"Why not?" he parried hotly, the doubt in her voice stiffening his pride.

"Not looking that way," and she was laughing at his uncouth appearance, contrasting sharply with the rich surroundings.

"There ain't no supper, Helen—not the kind you think. He's only fooling you," he said roughly.

"What do you mean?" she stammered. "We are waiting for the others!"

"Waiting for nothing. Where's he gone?" demanded the helper, now master of the situation.

"To reserve the tables—and get us something to drink," she faltered. "Everybody drinks—a little—before New Year's supper; he said so."

"You must get out of here, Helen. Believe me; you must believe me, girl."

She read the earnestness in his eyes and manner.

"Don't argue," he hurried on. "Please come now; it's for you. And I've got to get back to the cutover."

"The cutover!" she gasped. "Tonight?"

"Yes, and I've—we've got to go now. We've both got to be there."

They were hurrying out together.

"Where are we?" she weakly asked, and thanked the dim light of the corridor for concealing her flush of shame and mortification.

"Not where you belong," and he quickly began telling her of overhearing the telephone conversations and the race down town against time.

She realized now and her heart was singing.

"And you did it—you came just for me, Jim?" she said.

"Of course, I came just for you," bluntly replied the helper with mild surprise, for he knew nothing of the ways of a maid's heart.

But he saw something besides the light of the arc, shining in her upturned eyes, as they stood outside. Then suddenly, she was crying on his rough coat as he crushed her in his arms and kissed her.

He was quickly brought to earth and stern realities.

"We've got to ride that thing back, Helen. A street car'd never get us there in time.

"I'll leave it at the drug store," he called to the boy, as they whirled away on the motorcycle, unmindful of his protests.

"Carry me to the exchange, first, if you have time," she pleaded over his shoulder, as they got under way. He nodded and moved the spark up to where the machine, skimming over the pavement, seemed as if it would fairly crawl out from under them.

But a third passenger rode with them that night: Misfortune. And something went wrong with the motor. The engine gave a few gasps and choked. The helper tinkered a bit, but there was no use. Every minute now was precious. He rolled the machine to one side.

"I'll beat it on foot; maybe there'll be a car along soon; you can catch it." He dared not wait.

"No! I'll go with you," she began, firmly, then pleaded as she saw his forbidding look: "I can walk—or run. There's no car—till twelve o'clock."

He had no reply to this logic and only kissed her.

At first, they walked rapidly, then spurred on with impatience, ran, shoulder to shoulder. On and on, their feet striking on the pavement of the deserted street—a startling sound on the night air. Curious pedestrians turned and stared open-mouthed.

And the runners—against their pounding ear drums, smote an awful sound, when its import was realized.

It was the whistles. From one end of the city to the other they shrilled and screeched and roared, and the blast and boom of fireworks rose with the din.

The New Year! Puny man was trying to officiate at an event that had been occurring for countless cycles before his conception, and would continue as long after his dust had mingled with the earth that gave him birth.

Lights were flashing up. They saw them through the windows as they ran and knew what it meant. Knew it so vividly, they could almost see the confusion around the big new switch-board, all ablaze with line signal lights, flashing from a thousand impatient telephones; but helpless as a rent ship, because one man had not been at his post.

They rounded the last corner and their thumping hearts sank in despair. For there was his chief, the cableman, just arrived and peering down into the deserted manhole.

He whirled in astonished wrath on the helper. "Where in hell—?" and then he saw the girl.

The helper slid through the opening into the hole, and in a moment his saw was biting down through the soft lead sheath and softer copper wires of the big cable. He could feel the little shocks from the iron saw handle, as each severed wire, freed from the dead end cable, thrilled with the subtle life-like

flow of electricity from the new exchange.

Then he stiffened himself for the storm and climbed slowly up out of the hole.

But somehow, the cableman understood now. He must have remembered the little girl of the village for he was holding her hand in his great hairy paws, as she cried softly.

"Here, you," he tried to say sternly to the emerging helper, but his voice was a bit husky. "You two kids go over to the drug store, where it's warm. Besides, there'll be something doing around here in a minute or two."

It was too late, though, for even then the superintendent's car dashed up and that worthy tumbled out of it, fairly breathing fire between his clenched teeth.

"But how came the job botched up?" the superintendent was insisting, after the cableman had pacified him a bit.

"I guess my watch was slow, when he set his by it," said the cableman simply.

Then the wise old superintendent looked at the cableman and the helper, and the demure operator standing by.

As he was getting into his car, he turned, and with a dry little Irish smile, said, "A Happy New Year to all of you!"

"The friendly cow, all red and white,
Smiles as, in bovine sport.
She gives us milk with all her might,
At 20 cents a quart."

—F. P. A.

Just so. And it might be added, as one naturalist to another:

The hostile hen, all black and blue,
Which cackles like the geese,
Will yield one egg, or maybe two,
At just a dime apiece.

—*New York Telegraph*

The farmer still believes in the eight hour day—eight hours in the morning and eight hours in the afternoon.—*Boston Record*

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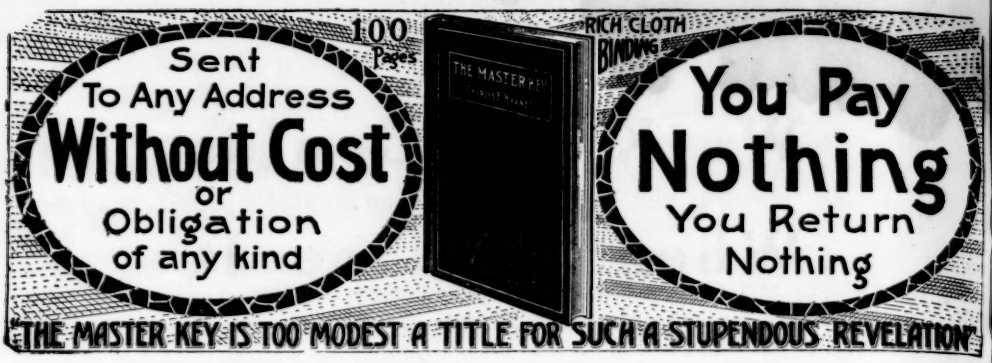

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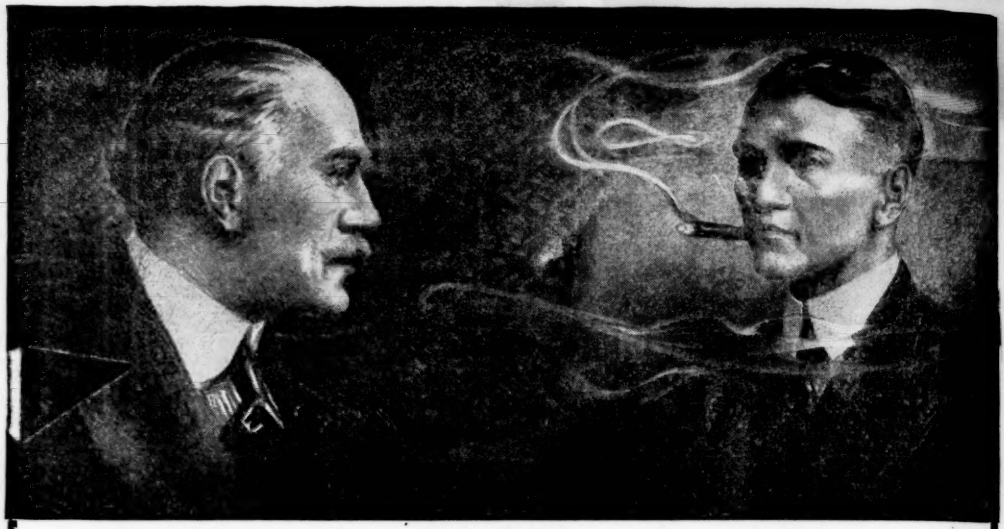

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"Nuxated Iron put added power behind my punch and helped me to accomplish what I did at Toledo."
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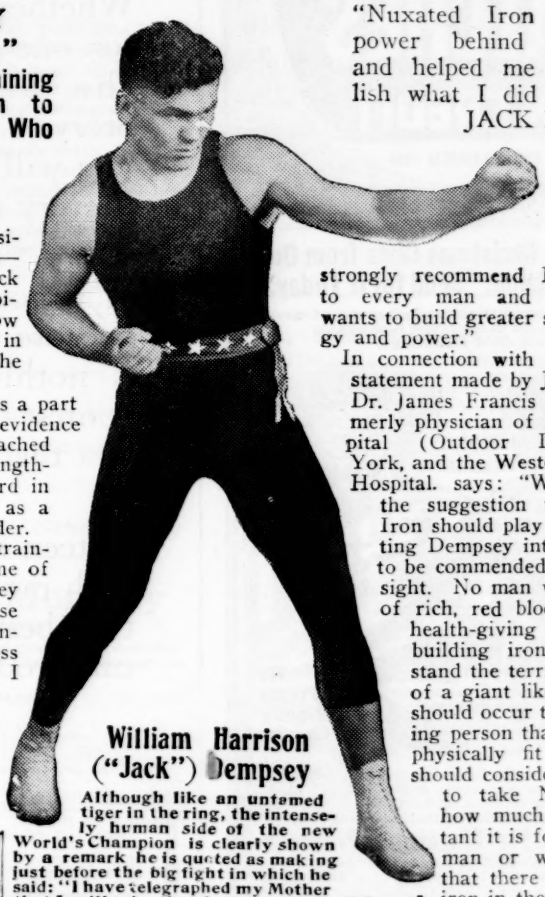

William Harrison ("Jack") Dempsey

Although like an untamed tiger in the ring, the intensely human side of the new World's Champion is clearly shown by a remark he is quoted as making just before the big fight in which he said: "I have telegraphed my Mother that I will win the championship and I am not going to disappoint her. I'm going to win that title for no other reason than because I've promised her I would." . . . Dempsey describes here the part Nuxated Iron played in helping him to keep his promise to win the title.

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